

Великая Отечественная: Незвестная война

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22 ИЮНЯ

Анатомия катастрофы



Издание второе, переработанное и исправленное

Abstract

"June 22, or When did the Great Patriotic War begin?" has long become a historical bestseller, withstood dozens of reprints and sold out in record numbers.

But since its first publication last more than five years, over the years new information on the history of the Second World War has become available, many new documents and studies have been published that require study and rethinking. Therefore, the author returned to work on the book and goy and actually rewrote it again.

This is not just a second edition, revised, expanded and corrected, THIS IS A NEW BOOK by a popular historian.

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Mark Solonin
June

**22 Anatomy of a
catastrophe Second edition,
revised and corrected**

*When an epoch is buried,
The grave psalm does not sound,
Nettles, thistles Have to
decorate it... And then it
floats up, Like a corpse on
a spring river - But the son does
not recognize his mother,
And the grandson turns away in anguish...*

Anna Akhmatova

"In the fortieth year"

FOREWORD

How did this book come about?

I am for a moratorium. Honestly. And if such a decision had been made at the state level, I would have obeyed it in the most conscientious manner. In fact, what

prevented the adoption of a common, binding decision for all: to ban any public discussion of the history of the Great Patriotic War. For a hundred years. Until 2045.

No books, no articles. In the school textbook - a brief notice that the country has a moratorium. And only when the memories of this Apocalypse that took place cease to be a bleeding wound in the heart of the people, when the last veterans leave, when the ashes of unknown soldiers become, as the song says, "just earth and grass" - then we will declassify ALL archives for ALL who wish to them to work and are working. Together we create a true, documented history of the Great War. That's exactly what we did - only exactly the opposite. The original

documents of the war were classified and guarded behind seven castles, as especially important secrets of the state. Even newspapers, the central Soviet newspapers of the pre-war and war times, were withdrawn from the open collections of public libraries. The speeches of Molotov and Stalin, the texts of interstate treaties publicly signed by the Soviet Union in 1939-1941—all this is a secret. Terrible military secret.

For half a century, a carefully organized vacuum of reliable information was filled with standard texts, like nesting dolls, in which the same directive established myths were carefully rewritten. Military history, as an exact science of facts and documents, has been practically replaced by propaganda incantations. It came to such oddities as the performance by the same nomenklatura dignitary of the duties of the head of the Institute of Military History and ... The Special Propaganda Department of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army!

The most important question, on the "clarification" of which a narrow group of people boundlessly devoted to the party worked, was the question of why in the very first weeks of the war the Red Army was crushed, defeated and for the most part taken prisoner? Why did the Wehrmacht manage to reach the shores of Ladoga, to the steppes of Kalmykia, to the mountains of the Caucasus? Why did the fire of war reach such places where foreign invaders had not been seen since the great rebellions and anarchy of the beginning of the 17th century? How did it happen that most of all the victims, all the blood and sweat of the war left only to return by the autumn of 1944 what was lost in the first few weeks of the retreat? Comrade Stalin himself was the first to point out the reasons for the "temporary failures" of the Red Army. In his famous radio address to "brothers and sisters" on July 3, 1941,

and then, in a more detailed form, in a report at a solemn meeting on the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin named three factors that allegedly determined the success of the Wehrmacht : - the German army was mobilized in advance and moved to the borders of the USSR, while the Soviet Union, which maintained strict neutrality, lived an ordinary peaceful life;

- our tanks and planes are better than German ones, but we still have them very little, much less than that of the enemy;

- for every step deep into Soviet territory, the Wehrmacht paid with gigantic irreplaceable losses (specifically, Stalin called the figure of 4.5 million killed and wounded Germans). Two weeks later, the Soviet Information Bureau allowed itself to

challenge the statement of Comrade Stalin himself - an unprecedented case in the history of this department. It was stated that the losses of the Wehrmacht by mid-November 1941 amounted to 6 million people. Let's give Comrade Stalin his due. He lied, but he lied wisely. From his deliberately false fabrications loomed the image of a

country peaceful, but with great potential. Yes, today we have few tanks - tomorrow there will be many; we were not the first to mobilize, but now we will gather everything for the front and for victory. Germany, on the other hand, cannot afford to lose six million soldiers every six months, which means that in the very near future, *"in six months, a year will collapse under the weight of its crimes."* It was precisely this perspective that Stalin outlined when speaking from the rostrum

Mausoleum at the parade on November 7, 1941. And from the point of view of military propaganda (which has no right to be true), he said what he had to say to people leaving for

battle. After the war, Soviet "historians" were given the task of strengthening the lie, but at the same time making it a little more plausible. Not an easy task, but they did it.

The fact that the Wehrmacht lost 4.5 (or even 6) million people at the beginning of the war was forgotten, hushed up and never remembered again. The logic here is very simple - the German archives had already been opened by this time, the materials, in particular, about the losses of personnel, were published, and to continue to lie like that meant to expose oneself to the

ridicule of the whole world. In order to "compensate", the picture of the defenselessness of the Soviet Union was strengthened by the statement that the main part of the tanks and aircraft that were in service with the Red Army at the beginning of the war was hopelessly outdated trash, "beyond any comparison" with enemy equipment. The thesis about the "surprise attack" was also much more persistently and loudly presented (Stalin himself tried not to stick out the topic of the notorious "surprise" especially, focusing on the word "treacherous" - and these are two big differences. The thesis about "treachery" characterizes Hitler as a criminal, the "surprise attack" thesis exposes Stalin as a blind, naive fool). Nikita Khrushchev, having come to power, also slightly modified the history of the beginning of the war. He presented Stalin as a stubborn fool - Richard Sorge and Winston Churchill sent him their famous "warnings", and he did not want to listen to anyone ...

Thus, by the end of the 50s, the version was finally formed, which in subsequent decades was hammered into the mass consciousness with the perseverance and inflexibility of a steam hammer:

firstly, we are peaceful people, we did not prepare for war, our government fought for world peace and tried to prevent the USSR from being drawn into the war;

secondly, "history gave us little time", so we didn't have time to do anything (tanks, guns, planes, even rifles in the right amount), and our army entered the war almost unarmed

(the Molotov cocktail played a key role here, even those who know nothing about the history of the war know about this bottle);

thirdly, Stalin did not allow the army to be brought into a state of some kind of special "readiness for war", and therefore German bombs fell on "peacefully sleeping Soviet airfields." From this

trinomial (which was sung in every way in all books - from a school textbook to thick monographs), the answer to the question about the culprits of the terrible catastrophe flowed easily and simply. The culprits turned out to be: - a story that "let us

have little time"; - Hitler, who for two or three months did not warn Stalin about his intentions; - and, finally, excessive naivety and

gullibility in general
positive comrade Stalin.

In this scheme, only one role was left for the native Communist Party - the role of the organizer and inspirer of all our victories. Everything is clear,

simple, logical. Any attempt to doubt the authenticity of these myths was regarded in the range from "cynical mockery of the memory of the fallen" to "a new sortie of literary Vlasovites." I confess: once I myself believed in all this. Then, at the senior school age, some vague doubts began to appear. Over the years, they have only gotten stronger. In fact, under Comrade Stalin, the entire Soviet

people worked. All men worked. Almost all women worked. Maternity leave was given for four months: two before and two after. Then - from the infant to the machine. The country worked from early morning until late at night. Well, military factories already long before the war worked in three shifts, from morning to morning. And, mind you, none of the hundreds of millions of employees worked as a merchandiser, speechwriter, image maker, trader, broker, dealer, shmler ... All specifically plowed in production. Where did the product go? How could we have fewer aircraft tanks than in Germany? What then

did these smoky factories do around the
clock? Refrigerators and juicers for communal kitchens?

Low labor productivity? Do not rush, do not rush, dear reader, with such suspicions. Let's first hear the opinion of knowledgeable people.

In 1936, Louis Charles Breguet, head of the largest French aircraft manufacturing company (which, together with Dassault, produces jet "Mirages" to this day), was able to visit the aviation factories of the USSR. In a report on his trip to the USSR, he wrote: *"Using the labor of ten times more workers than France, the Soviet aviation industry produces 20 times more aircraft."* In April 1941, the German Air Force Attache G. Aschenbrenner with a group of ten engineers visited the main aviation enterprises of the USSR (TsAGI, Moscow plants No. 1, 22, 24, Rybinsk and Perm engine plants). In a report provided to Goering, Aschenbrenner wrote: *"Each of these factories was a giant enterprise, where up to 30 thousand people worked in each of the three shifts, the work was perfectly organized, everything was thought out to the smallest detail, the equipment was modern and in good condition."*

condition..."

And in Germany there were then two and a half times fewer people than in the USSR. The German Frau stayed at home and raised Kinder. The grown-up kinders sang Nazi marches and walked in formation, pulling their socks off - not after work, but instead of work. In the second year of World War II, German aircraft factories worked in one shift! Aluminum, which was scarce in the war, was spent on the production of garden houses and ladders for picking pears. The production capacities of German factories were loaded with the production of gramophones and bicycles, radios and cars, Fildepers stockings and razor blades. Serial production of the first battle tanks, aircraft, and submarines began only in 1935-1936, less than one five-year period before the start of the World War.

So when did the Germans manage to create that notorious "multiple superiority in tanks and aircraft"? And from what they could create it? Germany does

not have its own bauxites, its own nickel, manganese, tungsten, copper, rubber, oil ... Simple coal and iron ore were not enough, the Germans had to carry iron ore throughout the war

by sea from Sweden. Under Allied bombs. And Stalin had the entire periodic table under his feet, including stainless gold, for which everything was bought in France, in America, in the same Germany: the latest equipment - entire factories, the latest aircraft engines, the best transport aircraft in the world, the best minds and the most secret blueprints. And all this

was not enough to arm the Red Army at least no worse than the newborn Wehrmacht? The author was distracted

from thinking about these questions for several years by his studies at the aviation institute, then by the design of a laser gun in a closed design bureau, then by work in a coal stoker and the social struggle of the era of glasnost and perestroika. This

struggle was not entirely in vain. Yes, much less than we would like, but nevertheless, in the early 90s, a large number of documents from the eve and the beginning of the war were introduced into scientific circulation, and previously classified works of Soviet military historians were published in the open press. In addition, the new times of openness, freedom of the press and the Internet have made available to the independent researcher the richest deposits of works by German historians and memoirists. And although to this day huge layers of documentary material are still hidden from the people (and without any decent explanation), what is already open is quite enough to assess in detail and accurately the balance of forces of the parties as of June 22,

1941. Yes, of course, there was no "technical superiority of the Wehrmacht" at all. A cannon of the First World War model was dragged by six horses, the main means of transportation for the Wehrmacht infantry was one pair of legs for each soldier, and this soldier was armed with the most ordinary rifle (it's only in bad Soviet cinema that all Germans in 1941 go with machine guns, but according to the standard According to the schedule, even in the elite divisions of the Wehrmacht of the "first wave" there

were 11,500 rifles and only 486 machine guns). Of course, the extremely militarized Stalinist empire, which had been preparing for the Great War for many years with the utmost strain of all the resources of the richest country in the world, armed and equipped its army in the best possible way. Of course, tanks and aircraft, anti-aircraft guns and tracked tract

There were more balloons in the Red Army than in the armies of England, France and Germany combined.

Of course, the scientific and technical level of Soviet military production did not just "meet the best world standards", but shaped them in a number of areas. The world's best high-altitude fighter-interceptor (MiG-3), the world's best aircraft guns (VYA-23), the world's best tanks (light BT-7M, medium T-34, heavy KV), the world's first multiple rocket launchers (BM-13 "Katyusha"), the latest artillery systems, radars, rotary cluster bombs, flamethrower tanks and other, other, other - all this existed, and not in drawings, not in experimental samples, but was launched into a large series.

Of course, the concentration of a three-million-strong Wehrmacht group near the western borders of the USSR was identified in advance by Soviet intelligence (which, by the way, somewhat exaggerated the number of enemy troops). And although there were never any original documents revealing the operational plans of the German command on Stalin's desk, the general military-political readiness of Hitler's Germany for aggression in the East was no secret either for the top state leadership of the USSR or for the senior commanders of the Red Army. The available

documents irrefutably testify that covert mobilization and covert strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union began before, and not after, the first gun salvos on the border. As for the purpose of this deployment, a discussion is possible (and necessary). Be that as it may, but in June 1941 the Red Army was preparing for war, and for such a war, which was to begin in the coming weeks or even days. The most that the Germans could achieve in such a situation was a very limited in time and space effect of tactical surprise. And no more.

Where do we start

As it often (or always?) happens in the history of science, new knowledge, having solved old questions, has raised new, much more complex ones. After it became impossible to hide behind a screen of deliberately false fabrications about the "multiple numerical superiority of the Wehrmacht", the discussion of the real causes of the unprecedented military catastrophe in history became even more relevant and even more difficult.

Strictly speaking, this discussion began many years before the final collapse of the CPSU. We are not so "*lazy and incurious*" (*Pushkin*) that among the hundreds of thousands of living witnesses of the dramatic events of those years, there are no people who are ready to doubt the authenticity of semi-official nonsense. Already during the Khrushchev "thaw", some figures, facts, documents fluttered into the light of day from the impenetrable darkness of military secrets, after the publication of which it became completely indecent to continue the previous lies. It is impossible not to mention, for example, Dashichev's two-volume monograph "The Bankruptcy of the Strategy of German Fascism." Although it was all devoted to German history and the author prudently avoided any comparisons, the last doubts about the "multiple superiority of the Wehrmacht in tanks and aviation" disappeared from the reader with eyes and brains. Nekrich and Grigorenko went even further. With a huge number of reservations, apologies and excuses,

they nevertheless wrote in black on white paper that the Wehrmacht had no numerical or technical superiority over the Red Army. For one of them, this ended with expulsion from the USSR, for the other - with imprisonment in a special psychiatric hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In the era of "new thinking", their work was continued by Viktor Suvorov. With the skill of a talented publicist, with the furious

assertiveness of a man who finally found the only truth, V. Suvorov in his trilogy (Icebreaker, Den-M, The Last Republic) left no stone unturned from the false myth about "quiet, peaceful and almost unarmed" Stalinist empire. One cannot but arouse surprise and admiration for the fact that, without access to even a small fraction of

of the array of documents that became available in the early 90s, V. Suvorov was able to reveal and convincingly show readers that many years of preparation for the Great Campaign in Europe, which was the meaning and goal of Stalin's entire foreign and domestic policy. It is difficult

to understand why, but V. Suvorov filled his books with a huge number of hasty, frivolous and - most importantly - having nothing to do with the main idea of \u200b\u200bthe provisions (all sorts of "offensive tanks", Su-2 superbombers, destroyed pillboxes on the old border of the USSR, and etc.). All these "highway tanks" and "flying jackals" made Suvorov's books - books that only marked the first steps towards the formation of a truly scientific historiography of the Great Patriotic War - extremely vulnerable to vicious and biased criticism. And yet, despite the mass of individual errors and inaccuracies, V. Suvorov wrote books that EVERYBODY UNDERSTAND.

He was understood by millions of readers, for whom the question of the plans and intentions of Comrade Stalin is now and forever resolved and removed from discussion; he was understood by former Soviet (now Russian) propagandist historians, for whom V. Suvorov became almost a personal enemy, for whose discredit they are ready to go to any meanness. Suvorov was perfectly understood by the professors of Western European (as well as North American) universities, who from year to year lazily rewrote their fly-infested abstracts - after the publication of *The Icebreaker*, all their scientific reputation and high-profile titles were under the threat of complete devaluation. It is not surprising that on both sides of the Atlantic a "conspiracy of silence" was formed at lightning speed, with which the "priests of historical science" who had long been incapable of serious and honest discussion tried (to tell the truth - completely to no avail) to surround the books of V.

Suvorov. At the same time, one cannot but admit that, having destroyed the old myths of communist propaganda, V. Suvorov, in one, but very important aspect, hastened to replace them with new ones. It turns out that the Red Army was great and powerful - but only until three in the morning on June 22, 1941. The next day, it was allegedly bled and disa

surprise attack by the Nazis. From the pages of Suvorov's trilogy, the solemn song of the First Disarming Strike simply flows: *"... with a sudden strike, Soviet tankers were shot even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured without crews ... A sudden attack on airfields blinds tank divisions ... Soviet reconnaissance planes cannot take to the skies... Our Cyclops' eye was gouged out.*

Our cyclops is blind. He swings his steel fists and roars in impotent rage..." And so on.

For greater persuasiveness, Suvorov also offered his own, much more plausible, version of explaining the reason for such embarrassment: the Red Army itself was preparing for an attack and, allegedly, therefore, forgot all caution. Compared with the mockingly stupid version of the communist "historians" (about how timid and naive Stalin was afraid to give Hitler a "reason to invade") Suvorov's erroneous hypothesis looks quite solid. As a result, both "Suvorov" legends got the widest circulation: both about the "first disarming strike of the Wehrmacht", and that the defeat of the Red Army was due to the fact that the troops that were trained, armed and prepared for offensive operations were on June 22 1941 forced to go on the defensive.

In parentheses, we note that in this version of myth-making, V. Suvorov was by no means the first. The same Grigorenko, back in 1967, wrote about how the "stupid" People's Commissar for Defense Timoshenko obeyed the even more "stupid" Stalin and moved all the artillery to the west on the afternoon of June 22. They would have to wait until dark - and they took her out of the camps and shelters during the day. It was here that enemy aircraft flew at her. And destroyed. All. All **sixty thousand** guns and mortars. Each German bomber (and there were nine hundred of them on the entire Eastern Front), rushing over the earth, like the mythical Valkyrie from the ancient Scandinavian sagas, destroyed one Soviet artillery regiment at a time ... In

the future, we will consider the issue in detail, with a pencil and a calculator in our hands. about what could, what did and what could not be done by German aviation. For now, let's turn to simple common sense and ask him a couple of simple questions.

Why do the "Hitler falcons" themselves know nothing about their greatest accomplishment? Mountains of books have been written on the history of the Luftwaffe. There are monographs devoted to the combat use of certain types of aircraft, there are monographic studies of the combat path of almost every aviation squadron, and all this with German meticulousness, with an exact indication of the serial number of each aircraft and the military ranks of all crew members. But about how on June 22, 1941 they "disarmed" the entire Red Army - not a word. And even the deceitful Dr. Goebbels did not say

anything about this to anyone! On the other hand, why didn't our "falcons" do anything of the sort? No, of course, we are not talking about June 41st. At that time, we didn't have planes, but "hopelessly outdated coffins", and pilots allegedly "with a flight time of only 6 hours". But in 1943, 44, 45, when the numbering of Soviet air regiments approached a thousand, why then was the Wehrmacht not disarmed, left without tanks, without artillery, without warehouses in one day with one mighty air strike? And why is there nothing like this in the history of the British

Air Force? Both French and American? The Americans have been bombing Germany (the territory of which is smaller than the territory of our pre-war Western or Kyiv military districts) since the spring of 1943. The Americans dropped several kilotons of bombs on one object in one raid. On the day of the landing in Normandy, each Allied division was supported by an average of (according to the famous American historian Taylor) 260 combat aircraft - this is 10 times more than was accounted for by one division of the Wehrmacht on June 22, 1941. And yet even ten months later, in the spring 1945, the Wehrmacht was still fighting,

and it was by no means fighting with bottles of kerosene ... Well, seriously, it is absurd to have a discussion about this. It was absolutely impossible to destroy (or at least significantly weaken) with one preemptive strike the Red Army, which by the beginning of the war had **198 rifle, 13 cavalry, 61 tank, 31 motorized divisions, 16 airborne and 10 anti-tank brigades**, in the pre-nuclear era. And with the weapons of the 21st century, to solve such a problem it would be required (taking into account the dispersal of the Soviet military

potential on a giant theater of operations) a huge massing of nuclear missile forces.

In reality, the main means of destruction that the Wehrmacht had in the summer of 1941 was artillery. Main calibers: 75, 105, 150, 210 mm. The maximum firing range is from 10 to 20 kilometers. It is these figures that determine the possible depth of the first impact in principle. Nine-tenths of the Soviet regiments and divisions were on the morning of June 22 outside this zone, 50-500-5000 km from the border, and therefore could not be destroyed even theoretically on the first, second, or third day of the war. It is worth noting that even the possessed Fuhrer did not demand such super-efficiency from his army. The planned duration of the "blitzkrieg" in Russia was still measured in months, not days, and it was supposed to defeat the Red Army by "bold advance of tank wedges", and not at all by one dashing raid of the Junkers. The absurdity (if not deliberate anecdotal) of the theory about an Army That

Can Only Advance is obvious enough and does not in itself require a multi-page refutation. It is not at all necessary to graduate from the Academy of the General Staff in order to understand that an offensive is a much more complex type of military operations than a defense. Difficult precisely because the offensive makes higher demands on the control and communications system, which in this case require a flexible, quick, unconventional response to a dynamically developing situation. It is just as impossible to imagine a command capable of organizing a successful, swift offensive, but at the same time not being able to organize positional defense on its own territory, familiar to every path, just as it is impossible to find a virtuoso jazz pianist who cannot play "Dog Waltz" from the notes. .

Finally, the so-called "offensive" army, armed with the best "offensive" tanks in the world, can always use the very method of defense that has been considered the best in all ages - to go on the counteroffensive itself. We will find many examples of this in history, but the most striking, in our opinion, is the experience of the Israel Defense Forces. This army never even tried to become suicidal in geographical

conditions of Israel (the minimum width of the territory within the boundaries of the UN resolution of 1947 is 18 km) positional defense. Both in 1967 and in 1973, the strategic task of defending the country from the many times superior enemy forces was solved by going over to the counteroffensive, and in October 1973 such a transition had to be carried out without any operational pause, immediately after attempts to contain the offensive Egyptian army on the defensive line of the Suez Canal were unsuccessful. Did the

Red Army try to act in the summer of 1941 in a similar way?
Definitely

- YES. Even the official "perestroika" historical science was ready to admit that *"the fascist blitzkrieg strategy was opposed not by defense, including maneuvering, with the widespread use of sudden and well-prepared counterattacks, but, in essence, by the strategy of lightning-fast defeat of the invading enemy."* [3] As always vividly and figuratively, V. Suvorov

expressed the same idea: *"The reaction of the Red Army to the German invasion is not the reaction of a hedgehog, which bristled with thorns, but the reaction of a huge crocodile, which, bleeding, is trying to attack."* More precisely, you can't say. In the North-Western

direction, a series of counterattacks by the Red Army (near Shauliai, Daugavpils, Ostrov, Velikiye Luki, Staraya Russa) continued from the first days of the war until mid-August 1941. In the main, Western strategic

direction, on the Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow line, repeated, practically non-stop attempts to go over to a decisive counteroffensive continued all summer, until September 10, when, finally, the troops of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts, on the orders of the Headquarters, went on the defensive. A detailed analysis of all these offensive operations

is beyond the scope of this book. On the other hand, the end result of these

counterattacks should be known even to a conscientious schoolboy. Nothing but the loss of hundreds of professional divisions, tens of thousands of tanks and aircraft, these

attempts to go on the offensive did not bring. The Red Army turned out to be incapable of an offensive just as it turned out to be incapable of creating a stable positional defense on such powerful natural frontiers as the rivers Neman, Dnieper, Dniester, Southern Bug, Western Dvina. On this statement, the whole

discussion about "offensive tanks" and "defensive aircraft" can be ended without even starting. Nevertheless, a painstaking and detailed analysis of the first counterattacks of the Red Army can lead us to important conclusions about the real reasons for its defeat. That is why the author decided to start the book with a detailed analysis of the course and outcome of **two offensive operations**, and precisely those about which one can, without sinning against the truth, say that these were the most powerful and best equipped with military equipment and personnel counterattacks of the Red Army.

There will be no sensations

"The service of the Muses does not tolerate fuss." Moreover, military history does not tolerate fussy haste. The reader needs to be patient. There will be no quick answers to the most difficult questions. There will also be no sensational "documents" so popular in recent years (which no one has ever seen), amazing "revelations" of former Stalin's servants (recorded by no one knows who and when) and other cheap boulevards. The

documentary basis for writing this book was the array of information that was declassified and introduced into scientific circulation at the turn of the 80s and 90s. The list of used literature contains almost two hundred items, but the following five sources are actually the key ones:

- "Secrecy stamp removed", statistical study, compiled by the head of the military historical service of the General Staff, Colonel General G.F. Krivosheee, year of issue - 1993;

- four volumes (No. 33, 34, 35, 36) of the previously classified series "SBD" (Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War), compiled by Soviet military historians in 1956-1958;

- a two-volume collection of documents "Russia - XX century. Documentation. 1941, 1998;

- a collection of documents "Soviet aviation in the Great Patriotic War 1941 - 1945. in numbers, compiled under the heading "Top Secret" by a large group of military historians in 1962; - a collective monograph by Soviet military historians "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions", published in 1992 under the auspices of the General Staff of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS. The source base

used has a clear drawback: it is incomplete, fragmentary and compiled mainly by precisely those people who, by virtue of their official and party duties, had the goal of hiding the truth about the circumstances and causes of the catastrophic defeat of the Red Army. An equally obvious and indisputable advantage of the sources used is their availability and verifiability. Strictly speaking, **there is not a single new document or fact in this book.** In normal scientific

historical environment, such a statement would have sounded like a "sentence", like a recognition of the worthlessness and meaninglessness of the book offered to the reader. But in Russia, everything is special: a special "path", a country incomprehensible to the mind, a shameful situation with absolutely illegal classification of documents from military archives, etc. And in this situation, it is **the use of those and only those documents that the Communists themselves had the imprudence to preserve and publish** becomes a huge advantage.

Once again, the reader has a lot of work ahead of him. Ahead of us are hundreds of pages of complex text, oversaturated with numbers, dates, numbers of divisions and calibers of tank guns. Time after time, we will stop before each "well-known", "for granted", statement that has become familiar, like trampled slippers, in order to think about what is really hidden behind these established myths?

Part 1

... THE DESIGN OF THE OPERATION

On the evening of June 22, 1941, and to be exact, at 21:15, People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko approved and sent Directive No. 3 to the command of the western districts (fronts) for execution. In this document, as it should be in a combat order,

a brief assessment of the enemy's grouping and plans: "...

the enemy delivers the main blows from the Suvapk ledge to Alytus and from the Zamosc region to the Vladimir-Volynsky, Radzekhov front, auxiliary blows in the directions of Tilsit - Siauliai and Sedlec - Volkovysk ... "and the nearest tasks for June 23-24: "... with

concentric concentrated strikes by the troops of the North-Western and Western Fronts, encircle and destroy the enemy's Suwalki grouping and, by the end of June 24, capture the Suwalki area; with powerful concentric strikes by mechanized corps, all aviation of the Southwestern Front and other troops of the 5th and 6th armies, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the Lublin region" [6, p. 440]. In parentheses, we note that this document alone allows us to draw a reasonable conclusion about the worth of the many years of boasting of the glorious "Chekists"

that the documents of the German command allegedly lay on Stalin's table half an hour earlier than on Hitler's table. In the six months that have passed since Hitler signed the Barbarossa plan, the Soviet military leadership never learned that the Wehrmacht's most powerful blow would be delivered by the forces of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group along the Brest-Slutsk-Minsk line. This direction is not mentioned in Directive No. 3 even as an auxiliary one. And what our command regarded as an *"auxiliary strike in the direction of Tilsit-Siauliai"* was in fact the beginning of the offensive of the main forces of Army Group North on Pskov-Leningrad. By the time Directive No. 3 was received and deciphered at the headquarters of the Western Front, the military situation

By the end of the day on June 22, 1941, the forward units of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht advanced 60–70 km deep into Soviet territory and crossed the Neman (more precisely, they crossed it along three unexploded bridges near Alytus and Merkinė) (see Map No. 1). But no matter how strong the offensive impulse of the Germans; no matter how weak the resistance of the troops of the 11th Army of the North-Western Front may be, roads and bridges have a well-defined capacity, and tanks in columns move at intervals of several tens of meters. As a result, when the 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht occupied Vilnius on the morning of June 24, and the 20th and 12th Panzer Divisions approached Oshmyany, the rearguard of the Panzer Group - the 19th Panzer and 14th Motorized Divisions - was still just crossing the Neman [13]. Thus, what military historians usually call the "German tank wedge" in those days consisted of several "strands of steel" stretching for 100-120 km along the roads of southwestern Lithuania. At the same time, the German infantry, walking in the truest sense of the word on foot, with their horse carts and horse-drawn artillery, was just beginning to build pontoon crossings across the Neman. The charter

requires that a subordinate of any rank and rank, with the unconditional fulfillment of the task assigned to him by a higher commander, should show reasonable initiative in choosing the most effective ways and methods of fulfilling an order. This is exactly what the commander of the Western Front, Hero of the Soviet Union, holder of three Orders of Lenin and two Orders of the Red Star, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov. Moving away from directly following the "letter" of Directive No. 3, he turned the spearhead of the offensive from the north-western direction (from Grodno to Suwalki) directly to the north, along the western bank of the Neman, from Grodno to Merkinė. The concept of the operation was ingeniously simple. A swift (two days in time and 80-90 km in space) strike on the flank and rear of the enemy infantry advancing to the west, the capture of bridges and crossings over the Neman - and the mousetrap into which the 3rd Wehrmacht Panzer Group drove itself shuts itself. Cut off from all supply lines, deprived of the support of their own infantry, the German tank divisions that broke through to Vilnius are surrounded and destroyed.

In parentheses, we note that eleven months later, in May 1942, exactly the same operation was carried out by the Germans. Then, in the course of the infamous Kharkov offensive operation, Soviet troops crossed the Seversky Donets and reached the suburbs of Kharkov. Meanwhile, the German tank army of Kleist crossed the same river near the city of Izyum (100 km south of Kharkov) and, moving north along the eastern bank of the Seversky Donets, which was practically undefended by anyone, cut off the communications of the Soviet troops, who ended up in "cauldron" on the western bank of the Donets. The result was the encirclement and defeat of five Soviet armies, while more than 200 thousand soldiers and commanders of the Red Army were captured by the Germans. The operation conceived by Pavlov could not have ended with such a large-scale success - simply because the German 3rd Panzer Group did not have 200, or even 100 thousand people. But in all other respects, the offensive of the shock group of the Western Front was, as they say, "doomed to success." Thanks to the prudently drawn in September

1939 "the line of delimitation of the state interests of the USSR and Germany on the territory of the former Polish state" (this is how the official name was given to what is called the "western border" in all Soviet books and textbooks), the Bialystok group of troops of the Western Front, even without firing a single shot, it was already hanging over the flank and rear of the German troops, squeezed in a tight "patch" of the Suwalki salient. The wise Stalin took care of this. And nature made sure that the Neman River turned 90 degrees near Grodno, thus "freeing" the way for Soviet tanks advancing from Bialystok to Merkin. There are simply no other large rivers that the defending German infantry could cling to in this area. Due to the fact that Pavlov abandoned the attack on the city of Suwalki, occupied by the Germans in 1939,

and decided to encircle and destroy the enemy's Suwalki grouping **on Soviet territory**, the Germans were deprived of the opportunity to rely on anti-tank defense prepared in advance in the engineering sense. It is superfluous to prove that in the area that the Germans occupied only one or two days ago,

there were not and could not be any minefields, or anti-tank ditches, or reinforced concrete pillboxes.

The strike force of the troops of the Western Front included two mechanized corps and one cavalry corps (in terms of the number of personnel, this unit corresponds to one rifle division). Thus, a "horse-mechanized group" was created (according to the military terminology then adopted in the Red Army), abbreviated as KMG. Pavlov instructed his deputy, Lieutenant General Boldin, to command the cavalry-mechanized group. At 23:40 in Bialystok, the headquarters of the most powerful, 10th Army of the Western Front (where Lieutenant General Boldin had already arrived from Minsk by this time) received Pavlov's order, according to which the KMG, as part of the 6th mechanized corps, **11 th mechanized corps, 6th cavalry corps** was supposed to *"strike in the general direction of Bialystok, Lipsk, south of Grodno with the task of destroying the enemy on the left (i.e. western. - M.S.) bank of the river. Neman and by the end of June 24, 1941, capture Merkina.*

Here, perhaps, it is time to interrupt the consistent presentation of the events of June 1941 in order to explain to the reader - what do these words mean: "mechanized corps"?

World War II can pretty much be called a "tank war". It was powerful tank formations that became the main tool in conducting large-scale offensive operations in that era. And as soon as we decided to find out the real offensive capabilities of the Red Army of the 1941 model, then we can't do without getting to know the Soviet mechanized corps better.

All mechanized corps of the Red Army had a single structure. The mechanized corps included:

- **two armored divisions;**
- **motorized division; - a**
- separate motorcycle regiment; -**

Numerous special forces (a separate communications battalion, a separate motor-engineering battalion, a corps air squadron, etc.). In fact, the

mechanized corps included three "tank" divisions, because. Soviet motorized division included

tank regiment and in terms of the standard (275 units) number of tanks surpassed the German tank division. In fact, the difference between a motorized division and a tank division was in the name and in a different structure, i.e. in a different ratio between tank and motorized rifle units. There were four regiments in the tank division: two tank, motorized rifle and artillery. The motorized division also had four regiments: two motorized rifle regiments, a tank regiment and an artillery regiment. In addition, each division had its own communications battalion, its own reconnaissance battalion, pontoon bridge battalion, anti-aircraft artillery battalion, and numerous engineering services.

A separate anti-tank fighter division was also prudently introduced into the composition of the motorized division (in case of meeting with enemy tanks). Obviously, in developing

just such a structure, the Soviet command sought to ensure that the corps as a whole had maximum operational independence. In the hands of the corps commander were: - a powerful armored "ram" from five tank

regiments; - its own artillery group (three artillery regiments on a mechanical traction, capable of breaking into the enemy defenses in the breakthrough area);

- mechanized "light cavalry" motorcycle regiment); (case
- own infantry (four
motorized rifle regiments capable of gaining a foothold in the conquered area and covering the advancing tank wedge from the flanks and rear).

The mechanized corps also had its own means of air defense, communications, and intelligence. Even our own reconnaissance aviation - a corps air squadron, which was armed with 15 U-2 and R-5 aircraft (the U-2 ultralight biplane, as you know, took off and landed in any forest clearing, thus radically solving the sacramental problem of "lack of communication") . To ensure high mobility of all units of the mechanized corps, according to the staffing table, he was supposed to have 5165 vehicles (of all types, including tankers) and 352 tracked tractors (tractors) for towing artillery and evacuating wrecked tanks from the battlefield.

After numerous changes in the staff strength, the armament of the mechanized corps was to include **1031 tanks**, namely: **126 KV, 420 T-34, 316 BT, 152 T-26** (including 108 flamethrower ones) and 17 T-38 / T40 amphibious machine-gun tankettes. In addition, the mechanized corps was also armed with such a type of armored vehicles (absent in the Wehrmacht) as wheeled cannon armored vehicles, a total of **152 BA-10**. This machine was created on the basis of a three-axle off-road truck and is armed with a 45-mm 20K tank gun in a standard tank turret, i.e. in terms of the power of their weapons, the BA-10 was superior to the light German tanks Pz-I, Pz-II, Pz-38 (t), Pz-III (the first series with a 37-mm gun), which still accounted for 60% of the fleet by the summer of 1941 tank groups of the Wehrmacht. The mechanized corps was also armed with light armored vehicles with machine guns (BA-20), created on the basis of a passenger car. The general distribution of armored vehicles of the mechanized corps is shown in the table:

	КВ	Т-34	Т-28	БТ-7 и Т-26	Всего
Исходное кол-во на 22.06.1941 г.	50	140	68	67	325
Подбито	13	54	10	8	85
Брошены, пропали без вести, прочие	25	49	27	28	129
Отправлены на завод, отработали моточасы	8	32		8	48
Завязли в болотах	2	2		2	6
Арифметический остаток	2	3	31	21	57

In total, there were 1299 units of armored vehicles in the mechanized corps . If you line up all the armored vehicles of the mechanized corps in one line with a standard march interval of 15 m between vehicles, you get a "steel belt" 25 kilometers long!

The presence of 126 heavy KV tanks and 420 T-34 medium tanks in service with the mechanized corps, among other things, means 546 artillery barrels of 76.2 mm caliber. At the same time, in addition to tank guns, the mechanized corps also included "ordinary" artillery, towed by special artillery tracked tractors (or powerful tractors), artillery: 76.2 mm caliber guns and 122 mm and 152 mm howitzers. Artistic systems of the corps were distributed as follows:

	76,2-мм	122-мм	152-мм
ТД	4	12	12
ТД	4	12	12
МД	16	16	12
Всего	24	40	36

In general, the weight of the total artillery salvo of the mechanized corps (not even taking into account the firepower of half a thousand 45-mm guns in the turrets of light tanks and heavy armored vehicles) was almost 6 tons, which was four times higher than the corresponding indicator of the Wehrmacht infantry division. It is worth paying attention to the ratio of the number of guns (100 units) and the means of mechanical traction (352 tracked tractors), not to mention the fact that the KV and T-34 tanks themselves with their 500-horsepower diesel engine could tow the divisional "three-inch" (weight 1.5 tons) or 122-mm howitzer (weight 2.5 tons).

The tactical and technical characteristics of the new Soviet T-34 and KV tanks, which were unique for their time (anti-ballistic armor, powerful weapons, a diesel engine, high maneuverability and a large power reserve), in their totality meant the creation of a fundamentally new tool for warfare. The T-34 and KV could independently (without waiting for the heavy artillery to approach) suppress the enemy's firepower at the forefront, and then support the infantry with aimed fire when breaking through the enemy's defenses to the entire tactical depth.

In December 1940, at a well-known meeting of the senior command staff of the Red Army, the future commander of the Western Front (and at that time the head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army), General D. Pavlov, reported with a sense of legitimate pride in his army:

"... Tank corps, supported by mass aviation, break into the enemy's defensive zone, break his anti-aircraft defense system, hit artillery along the way and go into the operational depth. Mechanized infantry and rifle corps rush behind the tank corps with their tanks... With such actions, we believe that at least a couple of tank corps in the direction of the main attack will have to deliver a devastating blow within a couple of hours and cover the entire tactical depth of the order of 30-35 km. This requires massive use of tanks and aircraft; and this is with new types

tanks maybe...

*... If it takes 120 shells of 76-mm or 80 shells of 122-mm howitzers to suppress one machine-gun nest in the field, then I ask you to calculate how many shots a tank will need to destroy one machine-gun nest? Either none, or from a distance of 1-1.5 km 2-3 shells. As a rule, a 122-mm howitzer is used to destroy the anti-tank gun. You need 70-90 shells. I ask you: how many rounds will it take for a heavy tank to suppress one anti-tank gun? Either nothing, or one shot ... I argue that the presence of a large number of heavy tanks will greatly help artillery in its work and reduce the consumption of shells ... " [14]. In February 1941, it was decided to form TWENTY-NINE such mechanized corps, which meant the deployment of tank troops **twice as large** as in the armies of Germany, England, Italy and the United States*

combined. Alas, even Hitler, although he was considered a "possessed corporal," was smart enough not to wait, but to attack himself. Attack before Stalin completes all his twenty-nine mechanized corps to the last nut. As a result, in reality, it was by no means the same mechanized corps that had to fight, which

described above.

"We did not calculate the objective possibilities of our tank industry, " marshal G.K. bitterly complains in his memoirs.

Zhukov, “ *to fully equip the mechanized corps, 16,600 tanks of only new types were required ... there was nowhere to get such a number of tanks for one year under almost any conditions*” [15]. It is surprising how the former chief of the General Staff could forget the program for the deployment of mechanized corps, approved by him on February 22, 1941? Tank troops are

completely outrageous in number and do not planned to create “*within one year*”.

All mechanized corps were divided into 19 "combat", 7 "reduced" and 4 "reduced second stage". In total, by the end of 1941, it was planned to have 18,804 tanks in the mechanized corps and two separate tank divisions, including 16,655 tanks in the "combat" mechanized corps [16, p. 677]. From the point of view of quantitative indicators, there was no problem with the staffing of these mechanized corps: by January 1, 1941, there were already more than 20 thousand tanks in the Red Army. But these were “obsolete” (obsolete in comparison with the latest KV and T-34 tanks, and not at all with enemy tanks!) T-26 and BT light tanks, and for the complete re-equipment of all 29 mechanized corps with new tanks, 3654 KV tanks and **12 180 T-34 tanks**.

The program for their production was planned in accordance with the real possibilities of the gigantic military industry of the USSR and was successfully carried out. In 1941, 1358 KV tanks and 3014 T-34 tanks were produced.

In the following year, 1942, the tank industry of the USSR already produced 24,718 tanks, including 2,553 KV and 12,527 T-34s [1, p. 598]. Total: **3911 KV and 15 541 T-34s** in two years. Moreover, this volume of production was provided in such "conditions" that in February 1941 Zhukov and Stalin could only see in a nightmare: two major enterprises (the world's largest tank factory No. 183 and the country's only manufacturer of tank diesel engines, plant No. 75) had to be transported under bombs from Kharkov to the Urals, two huge Leningrad plants (No. 185 named after Kirov and No. 174 named after Voroshilov) were in the blockade ring, the main manufacturer of armored hulls, a shipyard in Mariupol, was captured by the Germans. There are no reasonable grounds for doubting that, under normal conditions, Soviet industry would be even more able to provide

rearmament of mechanized corps by the end of 1942. As planned.
Having finished

with disputes and forecasts, let's move on to assessing what happened in reality. By the start of hostilities, **20 mechanized corps** deployed in five western border districts included **11,000** tanks. More **than 2 thousand** tanks were part of three mechanized corps (5th, 7th, 21st) and a separate 57th TD, which were already in the first two weeks of the war put into battle near Shepetovka, Lepel and Daugavpils. Thus, Zhukov had to start the war, content with "only" a fourfold numerical superiority in tanks. This is if you consider it super modest, i.e. without taking into account the tanks that were in service with the cavalry divisions and troops of the internal districts. In total, as of June 1, 1941, the Red Army had **19,540 tanks** (again, not counting the light amphibious T37/T38/T40 and T-27 tankettes) and **3,258** cannon armored vehicles [1, p. 601].

The available tanks were distributed among the mechanized corps extremely unevenly. There were corps (1.5, 6th), almost completely equipped, there were corps (17th, 20th), in which hundreds of tanks were not recruited. The composition of the tank fleet was just as heterogeneous. Most of the mechanized corps did not have new tanks (T-34, KV) at all on June 22, some (10, 19, 18th) were armed with extremely worn out BT-2 / BT-5, manufactured in 1932-1934, or even light wedges T-37/T-38. And at the same time there were mechanized corps equipped with hundreds of the latest tanks.

At first glance, it is difficult to understand the internal logic of such a formation. But one has only to put on the map of the border regions of the USSR the places of deployment of mechanized corps, as the plan of the upcoming "Thunderstorm" will be revealed to us in all its splendor.

As noted above, the western border of the USSR had two deep (120-170 km) protrusions, facing the edge towards German-occupied Poland: the Bialystok ledge in Western Belarus and the Lvov ledge in Western Ukraine. Two protrusions are inevitably accompanied by four "hollows". From north to south, these "depressions" at the bases of the ledges were located in the areas of the cities of Grodno, Brest, Vladimir-Volynsky, Chernivtsi. **If the Red Army was going to stand on the defensive**, then on the tips of the ledges there would be

only minimal cover forces were left, and the main defensive groups were lined up at the bases, in the "hollows". Such a formation makes it possible to avoid the encirclement of friendly troops on the territory of the ledges, to reduce the total length of the defense front (the length of the base of the triangle is always shorter than the sum of the other two sides), and to create the highest operational density in the most probable directions of the enemy offensive.

In fact, everything was done exactly the opposite. The main shock formations "huddled together" on the tips of the Bialystok and Lvov ledges. At the bases of the ledges, in the region of Grodno, Brest and Chernivtsi, incomparably weaker forces were located. A description of the entire grouping will take us too much time and space, so we will limit ourselves to considering the deployment of the "five heroes", five mechanized corps, in service with which 700 to 1000 tanks are found, including more than 100 of the latest T-34 and KV tanks, hundreds of tractors (tractors), thousands of vehicles. These are (listing from north to south) 3rd MK, 6th MK, 15th MK, 4th MK and 8th MK.

Even among these, the best of the best, the 6th (which was to become part of KM G Boldin) and the 4th microcorps (which will be discussed in part 2 of this book) are noticeable. By the beginning of the war, they were armed with 452 and 414 of the latest tanks, respectively - more than in all the other mechanized corps of the Red Army combined. By the beginning of hostilities, the 6th MK had 1,131 tanks (that is, even more than the standard norm), 294 tractors, and in terms of the number of cars and motorcycles (4,779 and 1,042, respectively), it surpassed any other mechanized corps of the Red Army.

Where were these "heroes"? The 4th MK was deployed at the very tip of the ledge, in the Lvov area. Next to it, a little to the south, the 8th MK was stationed (859 tanks, including 171 of the latest T-34 and KV, 359 tractors and tractors, 3237 vehicles). Slightly east of Lvov, in the Zolochiv-Kremenets region, was the 15th MK (716 tanks, including 136 T-34s and KVs, 165 tractors and tractors, 2035 vehicles). Before firing a single shot, the strike force, consisting of three mechanized corps, was already hanging over the flank and rear of the German troops of the Army Group South, compressed in the interfluvium of the Vistula and the Bug (see Map No. 3).

Even more revealing was the choice of the location of the 6th MK, which was hidden in the thicket of dense forests near Bialystok. You can guess how the mechanized corps with its huge "farm" got to Bialystok - a railway line approaches this city and Grodno, through centuries-old forests and bottomless swamps. The corps could leave Bialystok on its own only in one direction - to the west, along the highway to Warsaw, to which only 80 km remained from the border. To the east of Bialystok there is a huge impenetrable forest area (Supraselskaya Pushcha). There was no main road from Bialystok deep into Soviet territory (and, consequently, there were no reasons to expect the main enemy forces to attack here), just as there was none then, and there is

none to this day. The location of the 3rd MK is also very remarkable (672 tanks, including 128 T-34 and KB, 162 BA-10 cannon armored vehicles (1st place among all mechanized corps), 308 tractors and prime movers, 3897 vehicles). This corps was subordinated to the 11th Army deployed in the south of Lithuania, at the junction of the Northwestern and Western fronts. The border line in the area of this junction looked like a long and narrow "tongue", which, from the Polish city of Suwalki, went deep into Soviet territory in the Grodno region. In fact, the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht (four tank and three motorized divisions) and four infantry corps were deployed on the territory of this Suwalki ledge. Throughout the entire length of the Soviet-German front there was no other area with such a high concentration of German troops. The Soviet command might not have known about this, but the very outline of the border near Grodno inspired great fears. Nevertheless, the 3rd MK turned out to be much north of Grodno, in the Kaunas region (see Map No. 1). A strange decision to repel a very likely enemy strike from Suwalki to Grodno, but very understandable and rational for an offensive to the west, to Tilsit and

further to the Baltic coast. But directly at Grodno there was a poorly equipped 11th MK (331 tanks, including three dozen T-34s and KBs, 55 tractors and tractors, 920 vehicles). A little better (518 light T-26s, not a single medium or heavy tank) was also armed with the 14th MK, which, at the southern base of the Bialystok ledge, in the area

Brest - Kobrin, hit in the first days of the war by the most powerful blow in the entire Wehrmacht of the 2nd Tank Group of

Guderian. Somewhat digressing from the "tank theme", it is worth noting that in a similar way (the main forces - on the tip of the ledge facing the enemy) heavy artillery regiments (corps and RGK) were deployed. So, as part of the 3rd army, covering the Grodno direction, there were only two corps artillery regiments (152nd and 444th) and not a single artillery regiment of the RGK, and as part of the 10th army (the tip of the Bialystok ledge) - four corps (30 , 156, 262, 315th) and three artillery regiments of the RGK (311, 124, 175th).

Returning to the evening of June 22, 1941, we can state that Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group included four tank and two motorized divisions, which were armed with more than 1,500 tanks and 200 cannon armored vehicles, about 5.7 thousand vehicles **and** 350 tractors. In addition, on June 23, the 124th howitzer regiment of the High Command reserve was included in Boldin's KMG for artillery support of the offensive, consisting of 48 heavy guns (in terms of carrying a total artillery salvo, one such regiment was one and a half times superior to the Wehrmacht infantry division). Of the total number of 1.5 thousand tanks, a third (more than 470 units) were the latest medium and heavy tanks with diesel engines, powerful weapons (a long-barreled 76-mm cannon pierced the frontal armor of any German tanks at a distance of 800-1000 m) and reliable armor protection. It is very significant to compare the composition of KMG

Boldin with the strength of the Soviet tank armies of the final period of the Great Patriotic War. So, before the start of the Berlin operation, four tank armies (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Guards Tank Armies) included 709, 672, 572 and 395 tanks, respectively. Three tank armies (1st, 3rd, 4th) began the Lvov-Sandomierz offensive operation (July - August 1944), having 419, 490 and 464 tanks, respectively. On the eve of the largest Vistula-Oder operation, in January 1945, there were only 680 tanks and self-propelled guns in the 4th tank army of Lelyushenko, in the 5th Guards tank army before the start of the East Prussian operation (January 1945) there were only 590 tanks and self-propelled guns [167]. In other words, none of

The Soviet tank armies that victoriously ended the war in 1945 did not have even half of the amount of armored vehicles that was placed at the disposal of General Boldin! In June 1941,

this entire giant steel armada was to fall on five infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht: the 162nd infantry division and the 256th infantry division from the 20th Army Corps and the 8th, 28th and 161st infantry divisions from the 8th Army corps. Moreover, in reality, by the morning of June 24, in the area of the planned counterattack by KMG Boldin, there were only **two infantry divisions** of the 20th Army Corps, and three divisions of the 8th Army Corps had already crossed the Neman River and were advancing in the strip from Grodno to Druskininkai in the general direction of the city of Lida, advancing to the east by three almost parallel routes [61, 78]. Thus, during its advance to the north from Grodno on Merkin, KMG had a unique opportunity to destroy the enemy in parts with a series of successive

strikes to the flank and rear. Thus, in the first days of the war, a situation will develop **that exactly corresponds** (although Soviet historians have always assured us of the opposite) to the pre-war calculations of the Red Army command. Here is another excerpt from the above-mentioned report *"The use of mechanized formations in modern offensive operations"*, with which Pavlov spoke at the December (1940) Meeting of the highest command staff:

"... In terms of its capabilities - in terms of armament, manpower, strike power - the tank corps corresponds to five German infantry divisions. And if so, then we have the right and the duty to assign to the tank corps the task of destroying 1-2 tank divisions or 4-5 infantry divisions. Why do I say 4-5 with such confidence? Only because a tank corps in its scope will never fight simultaneously with these five divisions that have deployed and sent fire weapons against it. Apparently, he will destroy these 5 divisions in a series of blows one after another ... " [14]. What could the German infantry do in June

1941? Nothing or almost nothing. The main armament of the anti-tank division of the Wehrmacht infantry division was a 37-mm cannon, capable of penetrating 30-35 mm armor at a distance of 500 meters. To combat light Soviet tanks BT or T-26 this

it was quite enough. But after the very first encounters with our new tanks, the German soldiers gave their anti-tank gun the nickname "door knocker" (the meaning of this black humor is that it could only knock on the armor of the Soviet "thirty-four"). The sloping 45-mm armor plate of our T-34 was not penetrated by the German 37-mm gun even when firing from an extremely short distance of 200 meters. Well, there is no need to talk about the possibility of fighting a heavy KB tank (frontal armor 90 mm, side armor 75 mm). This 48-ton steel monster could iron the battle formations of the German anti-tank division almost unhindered, as on a training ground. It is no coincidence that by November 1, 1941, the Wehrmacht lost 2479 37-mm anti-tank guns on the Eastern Front, which is 1.42 times more than the losses of all artillery systems of the divisional and corps level (caliber from 75 to 150 mm inclusive), combined [171, p. 381]. Only in the summer of 1940 did the Germans

put into production the 50-mm Pak-38 anti-tank gun, which entered service with the Wehrmacht in the amount of **2 (two) pieces per infantry regiment**, and in the summer of 41, not every infantry division had these guns! The latest long-barreled (barrel length of 60 calibers) Pak-38 anti-tank gun was one of the best in the world, but even it could not penetrate the frontal armor of the 48-ton KV monster. The only possible tactic to deal with the KB could only be shooting at the side, from an ambush, at an extremely short distance. The frontal plate of the T-34 hull, although it had a thickness of "only" 45 mm (the cast tower had a wall thickness of 52 mm), was installed at an unusually large slope (60 degrees), which even purely geometrically increases the effective armor thickness to 90 mm. In practice, such a large slope of the armor plate usually led to the ricochet of the armor-piercing "blank". The best German anti-tank gun could hit the T-34 only by shooting from a short distance into the side of the hull (armor thickness - 40 mm, angle of inclination - 40 degrees). With all this, neither the T-34 nor

the KV were "miracle weapons". Absolutely invulnerable tanks, of course, do not exist, and the very term "protivoprotivoprotivodnoy booking" is a convention. The shells are very different. The German 105-mm cannon (not to be confused with a howitzer!) accelerated a projectile weighing 15.2 kg to a speed of 835 m / s, which gives

kinetic energy is 27 times the muzzle energy of the most massive 37-mm anti-tank gun. The heavy (combat weight 5.2 tons) 88-mm anti-aircraft gun (projectile weight 9 kg at an initial speed of 820 m / s) also had high energy, which theoretically made it possible to penetrate the frontal armor of the T-34, and under certain conditions - and KV. That's just to the real organization of anti-tank defense

all this "exotic" has almost nothing to do.

According to the staffing table of the infantry division of the Wehrmacht, 105-mm guns were not supposed to (these long-range guns were in service with the corps artillery divisions). As for the 88-mm German anti-aircraft guns, they were not included in the infantry (as well as tank and motorized) divisions of the Wehrmacht at all, because. all anti-aircraft batteries in the armed forces of Germany were organizationally part of the Luftwaffe and were not subordinate to "ground" commanders. The technique of firing at a high-speed high-altitude target has nothing to do with direct fire at a tank, the dimensions and weight of an 88-mm anti-aircraft gun (as well as a 105-mm gun weighing 5.6 tons) are very far from the requirements for an inconspicuous and highly mobile anti-tank gun. Finally, a fragmentation anti-aircraft projectile is practically useless for firing at an armored target. Yes, indeed, in the summer of 1941, finding themselves in a hopeless situation after meeting new Soviet tanks, the Germans were forced to engage in the

most ridiculous improvisations, such as using 5-ton anti-aircraft guns and long-range guns to fight tanks. Yes, using these guns, the German infantrymen could destroy a tank platoon (3 tanks), which, by pure chance, ended up in the area of the firing position of heavy artillery. There was no question of repulsing a massive tank attack by such means - a battalion of T-34 or KV tanks (not to mention parts of a larger scale) was supposed to simply "roll out" heavy guns on the ground ... Not only was the military-political leadership of fascist Germany did not provide its army with reliable means of fighting the new Soviet tanks, it also managed not to notice the very fact of their appearance in the arsenal of the Red Army. Only after the outbreak of hostilities, on June 25, 1941, the following entry appears in the diary of F. Halder (Chief of the

General Staff of the Ground Forces):

"... some data has been received on a new type of Russian heavy tank: weight - 52 tons, side armor - 8 cm ... 88-mm anti-aircraft gun, apparently, pierces its side armor (it is not yet known for sure) ... information has been received about the appearance of another tank armed with a 75-mm cannon and three machine guns..." [12].

In the memoirs of Goth and Guderian, the first reports of "superheavy Russian tank" (i.e. KV) refer only to the beginning of July 1941.

A discussion of how the military intelligence of an extremely aggressive state could not notice the appearance of new types of tanks in mass production from Germany's main potential enemy for a year and a half is beyond the scope of our book. This is a topic for a separate discussion. For our investigation, it is enough to note the fact that the German infantry divisions not only did not receive new anti-tank guns in sufficient quantities, but the very appearance of huge 50-ton armored monsters from the thicket of Belarusian forests should have been a terrible surprise for them. The effect of surprise - the most important condition for success in a war - was further amplified by

the fact that German intelligence was also unable to reveal in a timely manner the fact of the concentration of a powerful strike force in the Bialystok region. The morning report of the headquarters of the 9th Army (Army Group Center) dated June 23, 1941 literally reads: *"Despite enhanced reconnaissance, large forces of cavalry and tanks have not yet been found in the Bialystok area ..."* Only on the evening of June 23 in The report of the department of intelligence and counterintelligence of the headquarters of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht noted *"the appearance in the area south of Grodno of the 1st and 2nd motorized mechanized brigades"* [61]. What does this mean? There were no "mechanized brigades" in the Western Front, among the six tank and motorized divisions of KMG Boldin there was not one with numbers 1 or 2. It is only clear that in the end the Germans could not help but see the movement of huge tank columns, but this happened already literally a few hours before the start of the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops.

However, the defeat of the Nazi troops near Grodno and Vilnius did not take place.

WITHOUT WITNESSES

By and large, nothing happened at all. *"Due to the scattered formations, instability of control, and the powerful impact of enemy aircraft, it was not possible to concentrate the strike force at the appointed time. The ultimate goals of the counterattack (destroy the enemy's Suvalka grouping and capture Suwalki) were not achieved, there were heavy losses ..."* This is literally everything that is said about

the course and result of Boldin's KMG counterattack in the most solid historical study of the "perestroika times" - in the monograph "1941 year - lessons and conclusions, compiled in 1992 by military historians of the General Staff (then still the "unified Armed Forces of the CIS"). The phrase about "great losses" hides the fact that all three formations that took part in the counterattack of Boldin's KMG (6th MK, 11th MK, 6th CC) were completely defeated, all military equipment was abandoned in the forests and on roads, most of the personnel were captured or died, the few survivors in small groups for several weeks and months got out of the encirclement and went to their own already when the front line rolled back to Rzhev and Vyazma. In the previous fundamental works of Soviet historians (the 12-volume "History of the

Second World War" and the 6-volume "History of the Great Patriotic War") and newer, there was nothing but an indistinct statement of the fact that "the counterattacks of the Soviet troops, provided for by Directive No. 3, turned out to be fruitless." In the widely known, now classic military history works of German generals (Tippelskirch, Butlar, Blumentritt) there is not a word about the counterattack of the Soviet troops in the Grodno region.

In the memoirs of G. Hoth ("Tank Operations"), we do not find any mention of the Red Army's offensive in the Grodno region. It seems that the commander of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht never found out that a huge enemy tank group was aiming at the flank and rear of his troops.

Some mention of the hostilities in the area of the planned counterattack of KMG Boldin appears in the textbook "War Diary" of F. Halder, but only in the notes dated June 25, 1941

g.: *"The Russians, surrounded in the Bialystok area, are attacking, trying to break out of the encirclement to the north in the direction of Grodno ... rather serious complications on the front of the 8th Army Corps, where large masses of Russian cavalry are attacking the western flank of the corps ... "* But already in the evening of the same day (entry dated 18.00 on June 25), Halder states with satisfaction: *"The situation south of Grodno has stabilized. The enemy's attacks were repulsed ... "* Halder never

returns to the description of these events, and this description looks rather strange - nevertheless, the main striking force of KMG was by no means "large masses of cavalry", but two mechanized corps. It is not a fact that these records have anything to do with the actions of KMG Boldin at all: "serious complications" should have arisen in the offensive zone of the 20th Wehrmacht Army Corps (162nd and 256th Infantry Division), which was to meet with an avalanche of Soviet tanks, but Halder says nothing at all about this ... Most likely, the following entry (dated June 24, 1941) in the diary of Field Marshal von

Bock, commander of Army Group Center, is most likely related to the fighting of KMG Boldin: *"The Russians are desperately resisting ; there were strong counterattacks in the Grodno region against the 8th and 20th army corps ... "* A day later, in an entry dated June 26, Bock (as well as Halder) states: *" The position of the 20th corps on the right wing the army no longer inspires fear. In any case, he is not "burned to the ground", as some people said yesterday, and is even in quite combat-ready condition. Be that as it may, such rumors indicate that the enemy was making desperate attempts to get out of the "cauldron" [174, pp. 51, 54].*

It is noteworthy that neither Halder nor Bock even mention any involvement of large tank formations in these counterattacks; moreover, the decisive counterattack planned in Moscow and Minsk on the flank and rear of the enemy's Suvalka grouping is regarded by the enemy only as *"desperate attempts to get out of "cauldron"...*

As one would expect, the Wehrmacht officers, who were at much lower rungs of the command ladder, describe the events more dramatically. What is for the Chief of the General Staff or

the commander of the Army Group were just local and temporary "complications", at the level of regiments and battalions they were perceived as fierce battles. So, in the history of the 256th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht we read:

"... At 2 a.m. on June 24, von Bornstedt's advanced units and the 481st Infantry Regiment managed to break into the Forge and capture the crossings over the Lososna (a forest river, the western tributary of the Neman. - M.S.) safe and sound. From that moment on, fierce battles began for the bridgehead formed by the division ... during June 24 and 25, heavy attacks of enemy tanks had to be repulsed (Over Lieutenant Pelikan alone with his battery of "assault guns" disabled 36 tanks) ... " [175].

If the last statement is at least half true, then the valiant Pelican should have been awarded (most likely posthumously) the Knight's Cross at the same time. The battery of "assault guns" (Sturmgeschütz) is only 6 (six) self-propelled guns, which were the chassis of a medium tank Pz III, on which a short-barreled (barrel length of 24 calibers) 75-mm gun was installed in a fixed armored cabin. This gun in the Wehrmacht was called "cigarette butt"; due to the low initial velocity of the projectile, in terms of armor penetration, it was inferior even to the 37-mm "mallet" or the Soviet 45-mm tank gun. However, the "assault gun" was not intended to fight tanks - its task was to provide fire support to the infantry. Acting directly in the combat formations of infantry units, "assault guns" were supposed to destroy enemy machine-gun nests, mortar batteries, dugouts and bunkers with fire and caterpillars; for firing from extremely short distances at targets not protected by armor or concrete, a large initial velocity of the projectile is not needed. Even theoretically, even shooting at point-blank range, the 36 Soviet tanks allegedly destroyed by Lieutenant

Pelican's battery could only be light T-26 or BT tanks, but even in battle with them, the chances of an "assault guns" were very small: by definition, there is no swivel tank turret on an "assault gun", respectively, in order to fire at a tank maneuvering on the battlefield, it was necessary to turn the whole hull, inevitably exposing the enemy's 30-mm airborne

armor that the Soviet 45-mm tank gun pierced at a kilometer range ... However, regardless of all these theoretical arguments, the loss of 36 light tanks cannot in any way explain the reasons for the complete defeat of Boldin's KMG, which is armed with (let's repeat this again) was about 1.5 thousand tanks.

If we were writing a fantasy horror novel, then now would be the time to tell how SOMETHING rose from the gloomy abyss of the Belarusian swamps and swallowed up a huge armored armada without a trace. But the genre of this book is a documentary

historical investigation, and, unfortunately, we will not be able to write off the defeat on "evil spirits". And KMG Boldin did not disappear without a trace. *"The Bialystok-Volkovysk*

road along its entire length shows scenes of complete destruction. It is cluttered with hundreds of wrecked tanks, trucks and artillery pieces of all calibers," von Bock writes in his diary. The order, signed by Field Marshal Bock on July 8, 1941, states that the troops of the Army Group Center *"captured and destroyed 2585 tanks, including the heaviest ones" [174, p. 74].* According to the stories of local residents, collected by enthusiasts from the Minsk search association "Batkovshchina", *"at the end of June 1941, the Volkovysk-Slonim highway area was littered with abandoned tanks, burned-out vehicles, broken cannons so that direct and bypass traffic was impossible .. The columns of prisoners reached 10 km in length..." [8].*

The phrase about many kilometers of columns of prisoners may seem to someone to be an ordinary exaggeration of people who have become eyewitnesses of a gigantic catastrophe. Alas. Even according to a completely conservative (in the good sense of the word) study of modern Russian military historians ("The classification has been removed"), the irretrievable losses of the Western Front in the first 17 days of the war amounted to 341 thousand people, and sanitary losses - 76.7 thousand people [35, p. 163]. Taking the ratio of killed and wounded as 1 to 3, which is standard for all wars of the 20th century, we come to a figure of 310-315 thousand "missing", i.e. prisoners and deserters. It is worth noting that these numbers, obtained purely by calculation, are quite consistent with

long-known German reports, according to which, during the battle in the Minsk-Bialystok region, the Wehrmacht captured 288 thousand prisoners.

The memoirs of Soviet generals could shed light on the reasons for the defeat of KMG - but only few people managed to write them. Commander of the 6th Cavalry Corps, Major General I.S. Nikitin was captured and shot by the Germans in a concentration camp in April 1942 [20, 124].

Commander of the 36th Cavalry Division of the 6th Cavalry Corps, Major General E.S. Zybin was captured, where he actively collaborated with the Nazis. By the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, he was shot on August 25, 1946. He has not been rehabilitated to this day [20, 124].

The commander of the 6th mechanized corps, Khatskilevich, died on June 25. The circumstances of his death are unknown to this day. A few days later, near the town of Klepachi, Slonim district, an armored car was hit, in which officers of the headquarters of the 6th mechanized corps tried to take out the body of the deceased commander. At the same time, the head of artillery of the corps, Major General A.S., was mortally wounded. Mitrofanov.

Chief of Staff of the 6th Mechanized Corps Colonel E.S. Koval went missing. Deputy commander

of the 6th MK Colonel D.G. Kononovich went missing. Commander of the 4th Panzer Division of

the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General A.G. Potaturchev was captured, after being released from the Dachau concentration camp, he was arrested by the NKVD and died in prison. He was posthumously rehabilitated in 1953 [20, 124].

Commander of the 29th Motorized Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General I.P. Bikzhanov was taken prisoner, after his release until December 1945 he "passed a special check in the NKVD." In April 1950, he was dismissed "due to illness". Lived to be 93 years old, but no memoirs printed.

Commander of the 7th Tank Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General S.V. Borzilov was able to get out of the encirclement after the defeat of KMG; died September 28, 1941 in the battles for the Crimea.

The chief of staff of the 11th mechanized corps, Mukhin, went missing. They were captured and died in Nazi concentration camps, the deputy commander of the 11th mechanized corps, Makarov, and the head of artillery of the corps, Starostin.

Commander of the 29th Panzer Division of the 11th Mechanized Corps, Colonel N.P. Studnev left the encirclement and later died in battle in the summer of 1941.

The chief of staff of the 29th TD Kalanchuk was captured in early July 1941. The commander of the 204th motorized division of the 11th MK, colonel AM Pirov went missing in August 1941 [8, 20, 124]. Well, the fate of the high command of the Western Front was even more tragic. Commander of the Western Front,

hero of the defense of Madrid and former head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov was arrested on July 4, and on July 22, 1941, exactly a month after the start of the war (comrade Stalin loved theatrical effects!), he was sentenced to death.

In the same case, for *"cowardice, inaction and alarmism, which created the possibility of the enemy breaking through the front"* [67, 81], they were shot:

- Chief of Staff of the Front V.E. Klimovsky; - head of communications of the front A.T. Grigoriev; - head of artillery of the front N.A. Cry; - Commander of the 4th Army of the Western Front A.A. Korobkov; - Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the Tayursky Front. Commander of the Air Force of the Western Front, Hero of the Soviet Union, veteran of the fighting in Spain, Major General I.I. Kopets shot himself (or was shot) on the first day of the war, June 22, 1941. An attentive reader has probably already noticed the absence of

mournful list of executed generals of the same surname.

But this is really very strange. Both by military rank (lieutenant general) and by position (deputy front commander) I.V. Boldin stood above all the repressed, with the exception of Pavlov himself, of course. And if the entire command of the front was guilty of "criminal inaction and the collapse of command and control", then how could the head of the main strike force of the Western Front go unpunished? Boldin could not justify his inexperience. There were already two "liberation campaigns" in his track record: to Poland (September 1939) and to Bessarabia (June 1940). Moreover,

during the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Corps Commander Boldin commanded a cavalry

mechanized group of the Belorussian Front, which led the offensive along the Slonim-Volkovysk line and, after a fierce battle on September 20-21, took the city of Grodno by storm, i.e. the battlefields were well known to Boldin. Most likely, the key to Boldin's happy fate is very simple. The Chekists simply could not call him for execution in time - from the end of June to the beginning of August he was surrounded and was inaccessible to them. Well, in August 1941, after the defeat of most of the cadre army, after the capture of dozens of generals (in just six months of 1941, 63 generals were captured by the Germans), Stalin became more restrained in the executions of the commanders who remained in the ranks. Moreover, after leaving the encirclement, Boldin was noted with a kind word in the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, promoted and soon appointed commander of the 50th Army. Boldin's memoirs written

after the war are one of the few sources on the history of the defeat of the Western Front's shock group. Alas, the severe mental stress that General Boldin had to endure did not pass without a trace. The main motive of his memoirs is that the stupid and soulless martinet Pavlov spoiled everything: *"... Moving away from the apparatus, I thought: how far Pavlov is from reality. We had little strength to counterattack the enemy ... But what to do? An order is an order! Many years later, after the war, I became aware that Pavlov was giving my non-existent (whose fault is it "non-existent"? - M.S.) shock group one combat order after another. Why did Pavlov need to issue these orders? To whom did he send them? (it seems that Boldin did not understand that the task, which he failed in disgrace, was set before him. - M.S). Perhaps they served only to create before Moscow the appearance that some measures were being taken on the Western Front to counter the advancing enemy..." [80].*

But it's still "flowers". In a very serious document, in a memorandum filed during the rehabilitation of Pavlov and his "accomplices" in July 1957, Boldin (by that time already a colonel general) wrote verbatim the following: "... Pavlov is to blame for

asking *Stalin about the appointment to the post of commander of the district troops, knowing that from the beginning*

war, he will be the commander of the troops of the front. Pavlov, having poor operational training, could not be the commander of the front troops ... The chief of staff of the Klimovsky front is to blame for falling under the influence of Pavlov and turning into Pavlov's assistant ... "[81, p. 194]. About who possessed

"not weak operational training", Boldin modestly kept silent. Much becomes clearer if we remember that before being appointed deputy commander of the Western Special Military District, Boldin was the commander of the Odessa military district. Agree, being the first leader in Odessa and becoming a deputy in Minsk are two big differences ... However, the most senior commander in rank and position, who led the counterattack of the cavalry-

mechanized group of the Western Front, was not Boldin at all, but Marshal Kulik. A major Soviet military commander, deputy people's commissar of defense, head of the Main Artillery Directorate of the Red Army ... One of the people who personally saw Marshal Kulik left such words about this meeting

memories:

"... In the depths of the office, a door opened, and Marshal Kulik, a respectable man, tumbled through it. His face was brown-red and quite impressive in size... His speech consisted of some completely unrelated and meaningless phrases. It was pure nonsense, the nonsense of a half-drunk. The worst thing is that the commanders were confronted not only by the Marshal, but also by the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR..." [163].

On June 24, 1941, Marshal Kulik arrived at Boldin's KMG headquarters as a plenipotentiary representative of the Stavka (i.e. Comrade Stalin) on the Western Front. True, he did not command the counteroffensive for long.

"Marshal Kulik ordered everyone to take off their insignia, throw away their documents, then change into peasant clothes and change clothes himself ... He offered to drop weapons, and I personally orders and documents. However, except for his adjutant, no one threw documents and weapons ... " So, briefly and clearly,

in the report of the head of the 3rd department (i.e. counterintelligence) of the 10th army, the leading role of the deputy people's commissar of defense in combat operations looks Western Front [176]. Contrary to

rumors that "under Stalin there was order in the country", for all this Grigory Ivanovich was only scolded. Even the marshal's stars, thrown out by him in the bushes, were returned to

Kulik. Moreover, the biography of the commander Kulik was just beginning. On September 2, 1941, Kulik was appointed commander of the Separate 54th Army, which was instructed to unblock Leningrad. The result was a complete failure, after which, on September 26, 1941, Stalin ordered *"the commander of the 5th Army, Marshal Kulik, to be recalled to the disposal of the Headquarters."* November 8, 1941 Kulik was sent to strengthen the defense of Kerch - the last piece of Crimea remaining in the hands of the Red Army. Arriving in the Kuban as a plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters (and, to be fair, noting himself with a two-hour visit to Kerch), Kulik seriously took up food supply issues. Himself. The most perishable delicacies were sent to the young, fourth in a row, wife of the "red marshal" by military transport aircraft, everything else (including 50 kg of fat, 200 bottles of cognac, 40 boxes of tangerines, 20 kg of black caviar) was loaded into a special wagon and sent to Moscow [81, p. 238]. In February 1942, for this

looting in the combat zone, Kulik was put on trial for the first time and roughly punished: he was demoted in the military rank from marshal to major general, removed from the post of deputy commissar and removed from the Central Committee. In the party of communists - fighters for universal equality and fraternity - have so far been left. In the spring of 1943, Kulik surfaced again. For unknown merits, he was promoted in rank and even given command of the 4th Guards Army. I ordered ... I had to soon be removed and sent out of harm's way to the post of deputy head of the Main Directorate of the formation of the Red Army. In April 1945, for the collapse of combat training in spare military units and "domestic decay" (i.e., for systematic drunkenness and debauchery), he was also removed from this job, again demoted to the rank of major

general. The second, last and final sentence was carried out only on August 24, 1950. After the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court established that in drunken conversations, Comrade Kulik often scolded the party that elevated and held for so many years

This is a nonentity at the heights of power. Comrade Stalin did not forgive anyone for this. Even to your

favorites. Incredibly, Kulik's amazing biography still does not end there! In April 1956, he was rehabilitated, and in 1957, not without the knowledge of his old comrade, then all-powerful Minister of Defense of the USSR Zhukov, he was even "restored" in the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union! The quotation marks around the word "restored" are not accidental. At the time of his second arrest, Kulik was a major general, so it would be more correct to talk about a unique, one-of-a-kind case of a posthumous (!!!) promotion in rank, and even by as many as

four steps ... Strictly speaking, the mere presence such military leaders as Kulik and Boldin, could doom the troops to an unprecedented defeat. In search of other reasons, let us turn to a detailed analysis of the course of

FIRST FIGHT

First of all, it should be noted that the joint actions of the Northwestern and Western fronts did not take place. The main strike forces of the Northwestern Front - the 12th mechanized corps of Major General Shestopalov and the 3rd (without the 5th Panzer Division) mechanized corps of Major General Kurkin - were redirected from the Kaunas-Suwalki direction (as prescribed by Directive No. 3) to northwest, in the direction of Siauliai, where on June 23-24 a major tank battle took place with the main forces of the 4th tank group of the Wehrmacht. As for the 5th Panzer Division, by order of the commander of the North-Western Front, on the morning of June 22, it was withdrawn from the 3rd mechanized corps and transferred to the direct subordination of the

commander of the 11th Army. From mid-June 1941, the troops of the 11th Army, as well as all other formations of the Baltic Special Military District (the future North-Western Front), in an atmosphere of the strictest secrecy, were brought to a state of full combat readiness. Already on June 15, 1941, the commander of the district troops, Colonel-General F.I. Kuznetsov issued Order No. 0052, in which he reminded his subordinates that *"just today, more than ever, we must be in full combat readiness ... at any moment we must be ready to carry out any combat mission"* [19. page 8]. Further, in the order, quite specific instructions were already given: *"... Start installing wire fences immediately* (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) *... **From the first***

hour of hostilities**, organize the protection of your rear, and all persons who inspire suspicion , immediately detain and quickly establish their identity ... **Disperse and camouflage** aircraft at airfields in forests, bushes, preventing line formation ... Disperse tank units and artillery parks, place in forests, carefully camouflage, while maintaining the ability to set deadlines to gather on alarm ... The commander of the army, the commander of the corps and division to draw up a calendar plan for the implementation of the order, which must **be fully completed by June 25 of this year. [19, pp. 11-12].

On June 18, 1941, the commander of the Baltic OVO issues the following order: "... *To the head of the air defense zone **by the end of June 19, 1941** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) to bring the entire air defense of the district to full combat readiness. .. Not later than the morning of 20.6.41, at the front and army command posts, throw out teams with the necessary equipment to organize communication centers on them ... Outline and make teams of signalmen that should be ready by the morning of 20.6.41 **by** order of the commanders formations to take control of the communication centers approved by me ... Create mobile anti-tank mine combat units in the directions of Telsiai, Siauliai, Kaunas, Kalvaria. For this purpose, to have stocks of anti-tank mines transported by road. **The readiness of the detachments by 21.6.41 ... The plan for the destruction of bridges** to be approved by the Military Councils of the armies. Deadline **21.6.41**. Select from the parts of the district (except aviation and mechanized) all fuel tanks and transfer them 50% each to the 3rd and 12th mechanized corps. Completion date **21.6.41** " [19, pp. 22-25]. On the*

cover of Combat Documents Compilation No. 34 (from which these orders are quoted) is a stamp: "Declassified." Number of the Directive of the General Staff on declassification and date: 30.1 1.65 of the sixty-fifth year. For decades, the luminaries of Soviet military-historical "science" knew - or at least should have known - the contents of these documents, but they continued to tell stories from year to year about the "surprise attack" and the "peacefully sleeping Soviet country" ... Unfortunately, SBD

No. 34 is the only collection of combat documents of the districts (fronts) that included at least several documents from the period before June 22, 1941. All other collections (as well as all the TsAMO funds available to independent researchers) begin immediately with June 22, from the day of the "surprise attack". Everything that preceded this terrible "surprise" was safely passed over in silence. But there are no rules without exceptions. In SBD No. 33 (combat documents of mechanized corps) somehow got (and not even at the very beginning, but in eighth place, after the documents of July 1941) the order of the commander of the 12th mechanized corps No. 0033 dated June 18 [28. pp. 23-24]. The document is stamped "Special

importance", which is a rarity for corpus-level documents. Order No. 0033 begins with these words: *"With the receipt of this order, put all units on alert. **Put the units on alert in accordance with the plans for raising the alert, but do not announce the alert itself*** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) ... *Take with you only what is necessary for life and battle.* Next comes the instruction to begin at 23:00 on June 18 the advance to the areas of concentration, and all the final points of the routes are in the forests! The author of this book could not find the exact text of a similar order

for the 3rd Mechanized Corps, but it is known that the 5th Panzer Division was preparing for the imminent and inevitable start of hostilities in the same way as all other units and formations of the Baltic OVO: on June 18, all units the divisions were alerted, withdrawn from their places of permanent deployment and deployed along the eastern bank of the Neman in the area of the city of Alytus and to the south [8]. Thus, the 5th TD turned out to be exactly in the area (Alytus - Merkine), which was aimed at by the tip of the German "tank wedge". The 20th and 7th Panzer Divisions

from the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht attacked directly on Alytus. By noon on June 22, the German 20th Panzer Division, having covered a distance of 60 km from the border village of Kalvariya to Alytus, crossed the Neman along the bridge, which was never blown up, despite the existence of a "bridge destruction plan approved by the Military Council of the Army" (see. higher). Comrade Anfilov, the chief Soviet specialist in the history of the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, professor, doctor of historical sciences, head of the department of history of the elite MGIMO, in one of his many monographs, gives the following explanation for this fact: "Forcing the Neman by the enemy in a

short time was possible because the *4 th pontoon-bridge regiment, due to the complexity of the situation and the failure to receive an order to blow up from the combined arms commanders, the bridges in the above areas were not blown up*" [177, p. 67]. Here we are for the first (but by no means the

last) time confronted with the amazing logic of Soviet historians: the ill-fated "complexity of the situation" is perceived (and imposed on readers) as a kind of

a natural disaster, as a valid, "objective" (i.e., independent of the action or inaction of people) reason that justifies EVERYTHING at once. At the same time, the question of what was the cause and what was the effect is not even discussed; whether the complexity of the situation led to the loss of such an important defensive line as the full-flowing Neman was supposed to become, or, on the contrary, the mass failure of specific commanders to fulfill their direct duties allowed the Germans to freely cross the Neman. Which created a "difficult situation" ... In the memoirs of ml.

Lieutenant A.T. Ilyin (on the eve of the war he was the head of the chemical service of the motor transport battalion of the 5th Panzer Division), very remarkable details of this "complexity of the situation" are revealed:

"Our 5th TD, in advance of combat alert, went to the eastern bank of the river. Neman and took up defense a few days before the start of the war. When they occupied the defense, I was appointed as a communications delegate between the division headquarters and the motor transport battalion ... At about 11.30, they brought a wet woman across the Neman to the headquarters, who said that she had seen German tanks outside the city, but immediately the prosecutor shouted "provocation", "spy" and immediately shot her. And 30 minutes later, near the bridge, the fighters detained a man who was Lithuanian and told us in broken Russian that the German tanks were already in the city, but the security

officer shot him too, calling him a provocateur..." [178] . However, no river in itself is a "defensive line". In the end, in the absence of an armed enemy on such a river as the Neman, it is possible to build a pontoon bridge within a few hours. The defense of the frontier is provided (or not provided) by people, fighters and commanders of the corresponding military units and formations. On June 22, 1941, in the area of the city of Alytus, such a formation could (and in accordance with the plans and orders of the command of the 11th Army, should have) become the 5th Panzer Division. In a combat report, which at 9.35 on June 22 the commander of the North-Western Front sent the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, it was reported that "5th Panzer Division on the eastern bank of the river. The Neman in the Alytus region will ensure the withdrawal of the 128th Infantry Division (the division of the 11th Army

cover the rear of the 11th Army from the Lithuanians, and also prevent the enemy from crossing to the eastern bank of the river. Neman north of Druska ninkai" [19, p. 37]. It

is noteworthy that the task of *"covering the rear of the 11th Army from the Lithuanians"* (meaning two divisions of the 29th Rifle Corps of the Red Army, formed in 1940 on the basis of the armed forces of "liberated Lithuania") is in the first place, and the task of *"prevent the enemy from crossing to the eastern bank of the river. Neman"* is formulated as an additional (*"and also"*). But, of course, it is not this incident that should attract our attention. The main thing is that the 5th Panzer Division had real capabilities in order not only to delay the advance of the German 20th TD, but also to utterly smash it. The 5th tank (like the entire 3rd mechanized corps) was one of the tank formations

of the "first wave" (the first eight mechanized corps were formed in the summer of 1940) and was almost completely equipped with combat materiel. Artillery weapons were even more than the staffing table (see table.)

Таблица

	37-мм зенитка	45-мм ПТО	76-мм	122-мм	152-мм	мином. 50-мм	мином. 82-мм
штат	12	0	4	12	12	27	18
факт	12	12	6	12	24	32	18

Despite the noticeable "overabundance" of artillery, the available means of mechanized tractors (65 tractors and tractors) were quite enough to tow it (37-mm anti-aircraft guns and mortars were transported by motor vehicles and did not need caterpillar tractors). Already in November 1940 (that is, long before the start of the covert mobilization in the spring of 1941) in the 5th tank

The division included 1051 motor vehicles of all types, including 92 tank trucks (with a standard rate of 1360 and 139, respectively) [179]. However, the number of vehicles and tractors was not significant in a situation where the 5th Panzer Division took its first and only battle directly in the pre-war deployment area. The main armament of the 5th Panzer Division was, of

course, tanks: 188 light tanks (170 BTs and 18 T-26s), 30 three-turreted T-28s (this is an infantry fire support tank armed with a short-barreled 76-mm cannon - an analogue of the German "cigarette butt" - and two machine guns in separate rotating towers), 50 of the latest T-34s. The question of the availability of heavy KV tanks in service with the 5th Panzer Division is not entirely clear. Most sources say nothing about them, but, on

the other hand, it is known that in total, the 3rd MK was armed with 78 KV tanks at the end of April 1941 [180]. Heavy tanks could only be in service with two tank divisions of the corps (2nd TD and 5th TD). Even if we assume that the 2nd Panzer Division was fully equipped with KV tanks up to the standard norm (63 units), then in this case at least 15 heavy KV should have remained "for the share" of 5 TD. If we proceed from the data given in a very authoritative source [8] about the presence of 51 KV tanks in service with the 2nd Panzer Division, then purely arithmetically, 37 KV tanks should have been in the 5th Panzer Division.

Is it a lot - 37 KV tanks and 50 T-34s - in one tank division?

Everything is relative. In order to appreciate the armament and combat capabilities of the 5th Panzer Division, one should compare them with the armament of the enemy, i.e. 20th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht. The only German tank that,

in the summer of 1941, could at least theoretically fight the Soviet T-34 (but not the KV!), Was the latest modifications of the Pz-III medium tank (H and J), armed with a 50-mm KwK-38 cannon. At close range, this cannon could penetrate the side armor of the T-34 in the area where the track rollers were located (where the 45-mm armor plate was located vertically, without tilt). And although in order to shoot at the side of the enemy, the German tank had to actively maneuver on the field

combat, and although it is almost impossible to get into the narrow gap between the rollers of a moving tank, and although the 76-mm cannon mounted on the T-34 confidently pierced the frontal (and even more so the 30-mm side) armor of the Pz III at a kilometer range, there are some chances for the Pz-III crew could still have success. These chances increased dramatically when using a special sub-caliber armor-piercing projectile with a tungsten carbide core, but such projectiles were very rare, moreover, due to their design features, they usually ricocheted on the inclined armor plates of the thirty-four. In the entire grouping of

Wehrmacht tank forces on the Eastern Front, there were 707 Pz-III tanks with a 50-mm gun. But the 3rd tank group did not have A SINGLE gun of this type (in the neighboring 4th tank group there were only 71 such tanks). The tank divisions of the 3rd TGr (including the 20th tank division) were armed mainly with Czech Skoda tanks of the 38th model, which received the designation Pz-38 (t) in the Wehrmacht. This is a light tank with bulletproof armor, a low-power (125 l / s) engine and a hull assembled on bolts and rivets (the heads of which, when hit by an enemy projectile, came off and crippled the crew). O. Karius, a German tanker who met the beginning of the war in the 20th Panzer Division, recalls:

"... On July 12, they hit us. For the first time, I had to get out of a wrecked car... We cursed the brittle and inflexible Czech steel, which did not become an obstacle to the Russian anti-tank 45-mm gun. The fragments of our own armor plates and mounting bolts did more damage than the fragments and the projectile itself. My knocked-out teeth soon ended up in the bin of the first-aid post..." [183, p. 15]. The Pz-38(t) was armed with a

Czech-made 37-mm A-7 cannon, which, although it had slightly greater armor penetration than the German 37-mm "mallet", was practically useless for combat with the T-34. In general, the Pz-38 (t) in terms of the entire set of tactical and technical characteristics corresponded to the Soviet "hopelessly outdated" light tank T-26 and was significantly inferior (in terms of armament, speed, power reserve) to the high-speed tank BT-7. But even this "miracle weapon" for arming the tank divisions of the Wehrmacht is not

enough, therefore, in the 3rd Tank Group, even light combat training tankettes Pz-I with machine gun weapons were used as line tanks, which were unsuitable in principle for combat with any Soviet tanks.

On the morning of June 22, the 20th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht was armed with 44 Pz-I, 31 Pz-II (a slightly more powerful tankette armed with a 20-mm "gun"), 121 Pz-38 (t) and 31 medium tank Pz-IV (armed with a short-barreled 75-mm "cigarette butt"; the latest modifications had frontal armor reinforced to 50-60 mm) [10, p. 206]. The ratio of tank armament of the 5th Soviet and 20th German tank divisions can be presented in the following table:

		T-26	BT-7	T-28	T-34	KB
5-я тд (сов.)		18	170	30	50	37
20-я тд (нем.)	44	31	121	31		
	Pz-I	Pz-II	Pz-38 (t)	Pz-IV		

In the conditions of an oncoming tank battle, the Soviet T-34s and KVs were supposed to simply shoot this entire German tank "menagerie", while remaining almost completely safe. Moreover, the oncoming battle at Alytus was not completely "oncoming": the German tank division approached the city and the bridge over the Neman in a marching column, while Soviet tanks could theoretically be deployed in battle formation in advance (from June 19 to June 22) camouflaged in prepared firing positions.

There was no "two-year experience of waging a modern war" (which Soviet historians and propagandists so loved to talk about) the German tankers did not have in sight: the 20th Wehrmacht Panzer Division was formed in October 1940 ; she did not participate in either the Polish or French campaigns, and the battle at Alytus was also the first battle of the war for her. In the above-mentioned memoirs of O. Carius we read:

“... With the exception of a few officers and non-commissioned officers, none of us has yet participated in hostilities. Until now, we have heard real shots only at the training ground. We believed in the old warriors who had Iron Crosses and military insignia, but they remained completely calm. In all the rest, the stomach and bladder could not stand it ... ” [183, p. 11].

The tank battle near Alytus (which, most likely, was the very first tank battle of the Great Patriotic War) was not ignored by Soviet historians and memoirists. There is, in particular, written by the doctor of historical sciences M.V. Yezhov, an article specially devoted to this tragic episode of the war [178]. Unfortunately, the apparent abundance of information is by no means conducive to establishing the true picture of events. Rather, on the contrary, the facts cited (unless they are “facts” and not retroactively invented “good reasons” for the defeat of a powerful tank formation) contradict both each other and elementary common sense. In particular, according to available sources it is impossible to answer the simplest questions: where, when and what units of the 5th Panzer Division took part in the battle?

Chief Marshal of the Armored Forces of the USSR P.A. Rotmistrov met the war in the rank of colonel and as chief of staff of the 3rd mechanized corps (and before that he had acted as deputy commander of the 5th tank division for several months). It follows from his memoirs that only a few units of the 5th TD entered the battle with German tanks **on the evening of June 22**, and already **on the eastern bank** of the Neman: *“... By the evening of June 22, the enemy divisions of the first echelon of the 3rd*

Tank Group, using the captured in the area of Alytus and Merkin bridges, crossed the Neman. Trying to delay the advance of the enemy on the Neman, the command of the 11th Army threw the 5th Panzer Division into battle. Division commander Colonel F.F. Fedorov managed to advance to the bridge near Alytus only the artillery of the 5th motorized rifle regiment (and this is only 4 cannons of 76-mm caliber. - M.S.), a separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion and the 2nd battalion of the 9th tank regiment ... » [181].

But from the description of the battle given in the article by M.V. Yezhov, it follows that the 5th Panzer Division met the Germans with significantly larger forces,

moreover, **on the western** bank of the river, **in the middle of the day** on June 22, even before the enemy crossed the Neman:

*"... By the middle of the day, the enemy managed to break through to Alytus. Then, by order of the command of the 11th Army, the 5th Panzer Division advanced **to the western bank of the Neman to defend the bridgehead positions** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me. - M.S.) and immediately started a battle with units of the 20th Panzer Division. The 10th tank regiment of the 5th division, three kilometers **west of Alytus**, was the first to meet and destroy the vanguard of the fascist motorcyclists. Then the tankers of the 9th Tank Regiment, the artillerymen of the 5th Motorized Rifle Regiment and the separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion of the 5th Tank Division, having let the enemy tanks in 200-300 meters, opened fire on them with direct fire. In 30-40 minutes of battle, they knocked out 16 enemy vehicles. The advance of the enemy tank division **was suspended**.*

*Then, on the positions occupied by Soviet tankers **on the western bank** of the Neman, the enemies brought down bombing strikes and artillery fire. They suffered heavy losses. Enemy tanks managed to break through the bridge to the eastern bank of the Neman south of Alytus. But they were immediately counterattacked by units of the 5th Panzer Division, which crushed the German tanks and broke into the city ... "* According to other sources, the battle also began

on the afternoon of June 22, on the western bank of the Neman, and along with the tank units took part and one motorized rifle battalion of the 5th Panzer Division: *"The division commander-5 sent one motorized rifle battalion, reinforced by artillery of the 5th*

*motorized rifle regiment, to the bridgehead near Alytus. Later, as soon as they were ready, other divisions of the division approached at different times, including the 2nd tank battalion of the 9th tank regiment and a separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion. **Already by noon** on June 22, these units were drawn into a tank battle with the enemy's 7th and 20th tank divisions that had broken through to Alytus ...*

" [8]. There are reports that, along with the 2nd battalion of the 9th tank regiment, the 1st battalion of the regiment (T-28 tanks), which was in ambush near the bridge on the eastern bank of the Neman, also participated in the battle.

On the other hand, from the memoirs of O. Karius it follows that tankers of the German 20th TD reached the Neman without meeting the slightest

resistance: “...

With excitement, we expected the first combat contact with the Russians. But nothing of the sort happened. Since our battalion was not the lead battalion, such contact could only be assumed if the vanguard was stopped. We reached the first goal of our movement that day, the airfield at Alytus, without incident. Happy, we threw off our dusty uniforms and were glad when we finally found water to wash ourselves properly.

“It’s not bad at all to fight here,” the commander of our tank, non-commissioned officer Deler, said with a chuckle after once again pulling his head out of a tub of water ...” [183, p.

12]. The most surprising thing is that not a single source (including documents or memoirs of enemy soldiers and commanders) even mentions any participation in the battle near Alytus of the main striking force of the 5th Panzer Division - T-34 and KV tanks! The Germans simply could not fail to notice the meeting with the "thirty-four". In the memoirs of O. Carius mentioned many times above, an entire chapter is devoted to the “first acquaintance” with the T-34, and this meeting left the most vivid memories among German

tankers: “... Another event hit us *like a ton of bricks: Russian tanks first appeared T-34. The astonishment was complete. How could it happen that up there, they did not know about the existence of this excellent tank? The T-34, with its good armor, perfect shape and magnificent 76.2-mm long-barreled gun, made everyone in awe, and was feared by all German tanks until the end of the war. What were we to do with these monsters thrown against us in multitudes?* But this event, which amazed the

soldiers of the 20th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, did not occur near Alytus, but in early August in the Yelnya area! Where on June 22 were 50 T-34 tanks and several dozen KVs from the 5th Panzer Division? Were they too well disguised? The final defeat of the 5th Panzer

Division most likely occurred already on the eastern bank of the Neman, after units of the 7th Wehrmacht Panzer Division approached the battlefield, crossing the Neman a little south of Alytus (and also along the unexploded bridge). In the memoirs of Rotmistrov, this event is described as follows:

"... After capturing the second bridge across the Neman, south of Alytus, the enemy launched a swift offensive to the north and soon pinched the main forces of the 5th Panzer Division from two sides on the eastern bank of the Neman. In an unequal, extremely fierce battle, our formation was defeated, losing 90 combat vehicles, although our soldiers destroyed up to 170 enemy tanks, armored vehicles and armored personnel carriers.

In the documents of the enemy, the very fact of a tank battle near Alytus is confirmed. True, the loss figures are completely different. So, in a telegram sent on the morning of June 23, 1941 by the headquarters of the 3rd Panzer Group to the command of Army Group Center, we read:

"...6. On the evening of June 22, the 7th Panzer Division had the largest tank battle during this war (a strange expression for an operational report compiled on the second day of "this war." - M.S.) east of Alytus against the 5th Panzer Division. 70 enemy tanks destroyed. We lost 11 tanks, 4 of them heavy (in the Wehrmacht, the Pz-IV was considered a "heavy tank." - M.S.)" [182, p. 34].

There is nothing strange in the fact that the real losses of German tanks turned out to be an order of magnitude less than those declared by Rotmistrov - such an overestimation of enemy losses is not an exception, but the norm for any operational reports. Another thing is surprising: the Germans claim that they destroyed 70 Soviet tanks in battle (the real figure was apparently even less), and the Soviet marshal writes about the loss of 90 combat vehicles! Formally speaking, the term "combat vehicle" is not identical to the term "tank", but in this context, Rotmistrov, of course, meant tanks. Most likely, the memoirist needed a large figure in order to support his assertion that *"the soldiers and commanders of the 5th Panzer Division, despite the gravity of the situation, retained their courage and fought to the last shell, to the last tank."* However, even after the loss of 90 tanks, the 5th Panzer Division should have had more **than 200 tanks left!** It would seem that it is too early to talk about the "last tank" (by far not every Wehrmacht tank division had 200 tanks by the start of hostilities), nevertheless, after the battle at Alytus, the 5th tank division practically ceased to exist as a military unit.

The first (and also the last) battle of the 5th Panzer Division ended either on the evening of June 22, or on the morning of June 23. In the above cited

The document of the headquarters of the 3rd TGr refers to the evening of June 22. The same time is indicated in Anfilov's monograph (*"Soviet tankers fought a fierce, intense battle with enemy tanks for several hours at the crossings over the Neman River, but after dark on June 22 they were forced to retreat"*). However, in the memoirs of G. Goth, the former commander of the 3rd TGr, it is quite definitely said about the morning

of June 23 : *on the Russian 5th Panzer Division approaching from Varena. In "an exceptionally difficult tank battle," as the regiment commander reported, the enemy division, which was inferior in the ability to conduct a single battle, was defeated* [13, p. 68]. Modern historians also write that the last battle of the 5th Panzer Division took place on the morning of June 23 [8, 178]. There are also reports that on the night

of June 22-23, the 10th tank regiment from the 5th TD was engaged in such a strange thing for a tank unit as searching for a non-existent German "parachute assault force of 660 people" in the area of the city of Varena (30 km southeast of Alytus). Such close attention to establishing the exact time of the defeat of the 5th Panzer Division is due to the fact that already **at dawn on June 24**, the division commander,

Colonel F.F. Fedorov, together with the remnants of his division (5 tanks, 20 armored vehicles and 9 guns), ended up in the area of the Belarusian city of Molodechno, i.e. at a distance of 170 (one hundred and seventy) km in a straight line from Alytus! Army General S.P. Ivanov (at the beginning of the war - head of the operational department of the headquarters of the 13th Army of the Western Front) in his memoirs describes the meeting with the commander of the 5th TD as follows: "... A colonel entered in the *uniform of a tanker and reported that he*

was commander of the 5th tank divisions ... The tank division of Colonel Fedorov received the task of ensuring the withdrawal of the remnants of rifle units and preventing the Nazis from forcing the Neman north of Druskininkai. However, the enemy, inflicting powerful strikes with aircraft and artillery, did not allow the division to reach the Neman, and it also had heavy losses. On our shoulders

retreating infantry, enemy tanks broke through two bridges to the eastern bank of the Neman ... - This is

an irreparable disaster, - the tanker lamented, - and I will have to pay for it with my head" [45, p. 49]. However, from the

documents (Operational Report of the Headquarters of the Western Front No. 4 dated 10.00 06.24.41) it follows that Colonel Fedorov not only "wondered", but also engaged in what is called "spreading panic rumors" in the language of the military tribunal:

"...4. The commander of the 5th Panzer Division of the Northwestern Front reported to the commander of the 13th Army that Vilnius was occupied by the Germans at 17.00 on 23.6.41, who were continuing the offensive" [186, p. 37]. In this matter, the commander of the 5th TD strongly "hurried things" - the German 7th Panzer Division entered Vilnius only on

the morning of June 24th. Another group from the 10th tank regiment of the 5th (about 15 T-34 tanks and 14 light T-26 tanks) by the end of June DD rolled back to the area of the village of Voronovo (20 km to the right from the city of Lida, 80 km from Alytus), to the location of the 37th Prek Division of the 21st Rifle Corps of the Western Front [8]. Subsequently, this group was consolidated into a tank battalion, which on June 26-27 participated in the counterattack of the 21st SC in the Lida area. In the memoirs of G. Goth, there is a mention that on June 25-28 the German 19th TD in the Voronovo-Traby area *"is constantly subjected to enemy attacks with the support of 50-ton tanks ... until June 28, it repelled attacks from the south."* Perhaps these were tanks from the 5th TD, the childless crews of which, after the defeat of the division, continued their war ... The

command of the North-Western Front had by now lost any idea where the remnants of the 5th TD were located. In the combat report of the front headquarters, sent to the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR at 22.45 on June 24, it was said : .). *The position and location of the division on 24.6.41 is unknown" [19, p. 66].* However, is it worth it to create about one division, if two days later the headquarters of the North-Western Front "lost" the entire 11th Army!

In the next combat report sent to Moscow at 20.35 26

June, read:

"... The 11th Army - the headquarters and the Military Council of the army, according to a number of data, was captured or died. The Germans captured the cipher document. The 5th, 33rd, 188th, 128th rifle divisions are unknown in what condition and where they are. There are many stragglers and runaways who are being detained [on] the direction of Dvinsk. A lot of weapons were thrown..." [19, p. 69].

The remnants of the 11th Army and its headquarters (he was by no means killed and was not captured) were searched for by reconnaissance aircraft. Not German aviation - ours. On June 30, the search met with some success. On that day, a telegram signed by G.K. Zhukov: *"In the area of st. Dovgilishki, Koltynyany, forests west of Sventsyany (Shvenchenis), the 11th Army of the North-Western Front was found, withdrawing from the Kaunas region. The army does not have fuel, shells, food forage. The army does not know the situation and what to do..."* In classical Soviet historiography, such confusion was usually explained by the notorious "loss of communication" - German saboteurs allegedly cut all the wires, and supposedly no one had heard of radio communications in

the Red Army. There really was no communication in the units and formations of the North-Western Front (as, indeed, in all other fronts). But **there were technical means of radio communication**. And in large numbers. And not only at the level of fronts and armies. So, in the 5th Panzer Division already in July 1940, i.e. almost a year before the start of the war, there were (not counting 120 71TK tank radio stations): - 1 PAK radio station, - 23 5AK radio stations, - 87 battalion and company radio stations (6PK, RRS, RRU, RB-22) [179]. Now it's worth explaining what all these capital letters mean. The PAK is a powerful (500 W) radio station transported on two trucks. It provided telephone and telegraph communication within a radius of 300-500 km. 5AK had the size of

a large chest, was transported

in the back of a car or on a

horse-drawn cart. This radio had a range of 25 km for telephone communications and

50 km for telegraph communications, i.e. completely (and even with a noticeable overlap) provided radio communications in the front line of the division's offensive ...

The last mention of the fate of the 5th Panzer Division in the combat reports of the command of the North-Western Front is dated July 2,

1941: *"... The 5th Panzer Division on 24.6.41 in the Vilnius region was surrounded by the enemy and dispersed. The remaining fighters and commanders only began to appear in the Polotsk region on 26.6.41 (200 km east of Vilnius, 185 km northeast of Molodechno) and on 30.6.41 in the Pskov region. The material part of combat vehicles was completely destroyed or left on enemy territory. The remains of the personnel and materiel of wheeled vehicles are now gathering in the area of Pskov and Polotsk..."* [19, p. 107]. But the

gloomy forebodings of Colonel Fedorov ("I will have to pay for this with my head") did not materialize. The commander of the division "scattered" over hundreds of kilometers of space was not shot in front of the formation of the surviving fighters, and was not sent to the rank and file to the front line "to expiate the guilt with blood." He was appointed head of the Moscow Armored Training Center, and then head of the Solikamsk Airborne School in the Northern Urals. There, in the deepest rear, thousands of kilometers from the front, he was overtaken by an absurd death from typhus on January 20, 1945.

“And he went, he was swept away by the command ...”

In real history, the breakthrough of the Germans to the eastern bank of the Neman meant the beginning of the end of the Western Front of the Red Army. Rapidly advancing along the huge arc of Alytus - Vilnius - Molodechno, the divisions of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht reached Minsk, where on June 27-28 they met with the 47th Panzer Corps advancing along the Brest - Baranovichi - Minsk highway from the 2nd Panzer Group. Three-quarters of the formations of the Western Front ended up in a huge "cauldron" of encirclement. But on June 23-24, the current situation could be assessed in a completely different way: the German tank divisions left the area of the proposed counteroffensive of Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group, and the crushing blow of the Soviet tank "cleaver" was to

fall on the German infantry. Closest to the area of the planned offensive was the 11th mechanized corps of the Western Front (see Map No. 2). He entered the fight first. Fragmentary information about the very short combat path of the 11th mechanized corps is as contradictory and unintelligible as the above information about the circumstances of the defeat of the 5th Panzer Division. It can only be stated with certainty that any mention of the 11th MK in traditional Soviet historiography is accompanied by a stream of woeful lamentations (*"equipped by 23% with tanks of obsolete brands ... staffing with vehicles and tractor tractors was 15-20% of the regular norms ... staffing with tank officers was 45-55% of the state ..."*). Well, and so on. All this is pure truth. At all. Let's move on to specific

details. First of all, let's replace all these "percentages" with absolute values. The main armament of the mechanized corps is tanks. How many were there? In the historical literature, there are a variety of figures: 237 units

(VIZh No. 4/1989), 360 units (Internet site of the "Mechanical Corps of the Red Army" with reference to TsAMO, f. 38, op. 11373, file 67), 414 units ("1941 - lessons and conclusions). The author proposes to take the number 331 as a basis - this is the number of tanks indicated in the document,

compiled by direct participants in the events. We are talking about the Political Report of the Political Department of the 11th Mechanized Corps to the Military Adviser of the Western Front dated July 15, 1941, published in VIZh No. 9/1989. The tanks in the 11th MK were indeed the most obsolete: 242 T-26 tanks, 18 OT-26 flamethrower tanks and 44 BT tanks of the old modification (BT-5). There are very few new tanks: 24 (according to other sources - 28) medium

T-34s and 3 heavy KVs. In addition, *"up to 10-15% of the tanks were not taken on a campaign,*

as they were under repair." Total: about 280 combat-ready tanks, almost all of them a and outdated.

Question: can a tank formation armed with such "trash" fight? Everything is relative. For

decades, Soviet "historians" for some reason ignored this simplest, most obvious rule. Of course, the 11th MK was weak and "unfinished" - compared, for example, with the 6th mechanized corps of the Western Front or the 3rd mechanized corps of the North-Western Front, which were armed with hundreds of the latest T-34s and KVs. But it was necessary to fight with the Germans, and not with their front-line neighbors! With German tank formations, with their equipment, with their weapons, with their capabilities, one must compare the combat power of the 11th mechanized corps. The troops of the five western military districts

included 20 mechanized corps. If we exclude the 17th MK and 20th MK from this list, in which there were only 63 and 94 tanks, respectively (in the Red Army they said about 94 tanks "only 94"), then 18 mechanized corps remain. And the Wehrmacht's invasion forces included **17 tank divisions**. It is with them that it is possible and necessary to compare our mechanized corps, in particular the 11th MK.

German tank divisions and corps did not have a strictly defined composition. Therefore, let's take for comparison **the largest tank division** of the Wehrmacht, which was sore on the entire Eastern Front. This is the 7th Panzer under the command of Major General von Funk. Such a comparison is all the more appropriate because the 7th TD was part of the same 3rd Wehrmacht Panzer Group, on the flank and rear of which Boldin's KMG should have struck.

The main armament of a tank division is tanks. There were **265** of them in the 7th TD of the Wehrmacht . And in our "understaffed" 11th MK - **331** tanks. For some reason, it is generally accepted (among Soviet propagandists) to believe that the Germans never broke anything and the number of combat-ready tanks was always equal to their total number. Even if we take this absurd assumption on faith, then even then the 11th MK surpassed the largest Wehrmacht tank division in terms of the number of combat-ready tanks (280 versus 265).

Now let's move from quantity to quality. By the beginning of the war, the 7th TD was armed with [10, p.

206]: - 53 Pz-II

tankettes; - 167 light tanks

Pz-38(t); - 30 medium tanks

Pz-IV; - 15 "commander" tanks with machine guns, 7 of them based on

Pz-38(t). At first glance, the 11th MK and the 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht had approximately equal combat capabilities (and this is not taking into account the undeniable qualitative superiority of the Soviet T-34s and design bureaus over the German Pz-IV). But this is a hasty and essentially erroneous conclusion.

The 11th mechanized corps was much stronger. "A tank is a cart for a cannon." In this aphorism, the authorship of which is attributed to the outstanding Soviet artillery designer Grabin, there is, of course, an element of exaggeration. But quite small. All parameters of the tank, no matter how important they may be in themselves, are secondary in relation to the main thing - weapons. The tank was created not for driving and not for shelter, but for destruction. Destruction of firepower and manpower, command posts and communication centers behind enemy lines, defeating transport columns and warehouses in the

operational depth of his defense. So, to fulfill these basic tasks of the tank troops, the 11th MK was much better armed than the 7th Wehrmacht TD. Under our 45-mm 20K tank gun, a high-explosive fragmentation projectile weighing 2.13 kg was developed. Such a projectile gave 100 lethal fragments that hit the open manpower of the enemy in a band of 15.6 meters. Yes, of course, this is a very light projectile (three times lighter than a standard "three-inch"), but still many targets on

(machine gun nest, mortar battery) he could hit. The 11th Mechanized Corps was armed with **345 20K cannons** (286 on T-26 and BT tanks, 59 on BA-10 cannon armored vehicles). And the German 7th TD was

armed with only 167 tank guns of the Skoda A-7 company. Exactly two times less than in the 11th MK. Moreover, the weight of the German 37-mm fragmentation projectile (690 g) was three times less than that of the corresponding Soviet 20K projectile, which led to a significantly lower damaging effect on infantry and enemy shelters. As for the light German tankettes Pz-II, the 20-mm cannon

mounted on them was, in principle, not suitable for fighting infantry and artillery. A projectile weighing 120-145 g, carrying (in different versions) from 4 to 15 g of explosive, was very weak. Before the war in the USSR, guns of this caliber were installed only on fighter planes, but by no means on armored vehicles. Moreover, the tests and combat use of 20-mm air guns showed that "the defeat of manpower in open areas" is possible only with a direct hit on a person, while the fragmentation effect of a 20-mm "projectile" was completely insignificant. Of course, serious "work" on fire suppression of the enemy should have been assigned not to light tanks, but to mechanized howitzer artillery. This is where the difference between

the Soviet mechanized CORPS (even if understaffed) and the German DIVISION is mainly manifested.

By the beginning of the war, the artillery regiments of three divisions of the 11th MK were armed with [78]:

- 16 howitzers of 152 mm caliber;
- 36 122 mm howitzers.

Yes, this is much less than the standard norms (36 howitzers of 152 mm caliber and 40 howitzers of 122 mm caliber), but in service with a German tank division, completely, "to the last button", equipped according to the state of autumn 1940, there could only be: - 12

- howitzers caliber 150 mm;
- 24 howitzers of 105 mm caliber;
- 4 guns of 150 mm caliber. The

general conclusion is obvious: even the understaffed 11th MK was superior in firepower to the largest tank division.

Wehrmacht. Finally, there were more people in any Soviet mechanized corps than in any German tank division. Which is not surprising: there are three divisions in the corps and many separate corps units. More specifically, as of June 1, 1941, 21,605 personnel were serving in the understaffed 11th mechanized corps, and the maximum staff strength of a German tank division was one and a half times less. Moreover, 21,605 people were in the 11th MK as of June 1, 1941. By June 22, most likely, there were more people, since the covert mobilization of reservists was in full swing in the country (in total, 768 thousand people managed to call for "big training camps" before the start of the war), and mechanized formations were understaffed in the first place. The only thing in which the 11th MK was inferior to the 7th TD of the enemy was in the number of vehicles, i.e. in the ability of motorized infantry, artillery and rear services to move after the advancing "tank wedge". By June 1, 1941, the corps was armed with 920 cars, 148 motorcycles, 55 tractors and tractors. This is significantly (5-6 times) less than standard norms. And if the 11th mechanized corps really went on the offensive from Grodno on Merkin (60-70 km), as was prescribed by Pavlov's order, then the motorized infantry, not fully provided with transport, would inevitably lag behind the tanks. In theory. In reality, there was not even a trace of any breakthrough into the operational depth of the enemy's defense; there was no need to chase the Germans - they themselves approached Grodno, and the 11th MK took its first and last battle almost in the area of the pre-war deployment. In such a situation, the lack of vehicles could not have a decisive value. Moreover, from the aforementioned "political report" we learn that on the morning of June 22, the corps command made an absolutely correct decision: "... On alert, all units withdrew all personnel with weapons and able to fight, which amounted to 50-60% of the entire composition, and the rest of the composition was left in the area of deployment of units ... Due to the lack of vehicles for the 204th motorized division, the 1st echelon from the Volkovysk region (82 km along the highway to Grodno. - M .S.) were transferred by vehicles, and the subsequent ones were transferred by a combined march (i.e.

rifle units of the 204th MD walked on foot until they were picked up by vehicles that returned after transporting the 1st echelon of the division. - M.S). *After 7 hours (29th TD after 3 hours and 33rd TD - after 4 hours) after the announcement of a combat alert, parts of the corps occupied the concentration*

*area ... "It remains to be recognized that Soviet historians were absolutely right. There was no "mechanized corps" in the Grodno region. Under the name "11th mechanized corps" by 10 a.m. on June 22, 1941, a division of light tanks was actually concentrated south of Grodno, in all quantitative parameters significantly **superior to the largest tank division of the Wehrmacht.** The largest, the 7th*

tank division of the Wehrmacht, did a lot of trouble. In great detail, truly "in German", written memoirs of the commander of the 3rd tank group G. Goth [13] allow us to trace in detail the combat path of the 7th TD in the first days and weeks of the war.

By noon on June 22, the bridges across the Neman near Alytus were captured, at noon on June 23, "the tank regiment of the 7th TD entered the Lida-Vilnius road (75 km east of Alytus), the division's wheeled vehicles were left far behind" (but what is noteworthy is that the German general did not does not conclude from this that the division had lost all combat effectiveness), early in the morning of June 24, "7th TD after a small battle captured the city of Vilnius, the tank regiment of the division continued to advance towards Mikhalishki" (Mikhalishki is already Belarus, and already 180 km east of the border). Further, "the 7th TD left on June 26 to the Minsk-Moscow highway in the Smolevichi area" (this is already 30 km east of Minsk). Thus, in five days the division covered 350 km along the forest roads of Lithuania and Belarus. Then the 7th

TD, having failed in an attempt to force the Berezina near the city of Borisov, went to the northeast, through Lepel to Vitebsk. On July 5, in the Beshenkovichi area (175 km from Minsk), the 7th TD "stumbled" on a full-fledged 7th MK that approached from the Moscow Military District (this is the same mechanized corps in which Stalin's son fought and was captured). Having defeated and driven back the Soviet mechanized corps to the south, the 7th and 20th TD crossed the Western Dvina between Beshenkovichi and Ulla, by July 10 they completely captured Vitebsk, after which their roads diverged again: the 20th TD went to the northeast, to Velizh , and the 7th TD through Demidov for the second time entered the highway No. 1

Yartsev (50 km east of Smolensk), thus overcoming two-thirds of the distance from the border to Moscow.

Three months later, on October 6, 1941, it was the 7th tank in the Vyazma region that entered the highway No. 1 for the third time, thus closing the encirclement of the largest Vyazemsky "boiler" in the entire war. Then, during the bloody Moscow battle, the 7th TD moved another 245 km to the east, to Yakhroma (45 km north of Moscow). Only there, at the Volga-Moscow canal, was it (according to the famous report of the Sovinformburo of December 13, 1941) defeated by the troops of the 1st Shock Army. True, according to German data, the 7th Panzer fought on the Eastern and Western fronts even

before 1943. The practical conclusion from all of the above is that the division of light tanks, it turns out, can fight, can attack, can conduct a successful battle with both infantry and enemy tanks, can force full-flowing rivers and take large cities by storm. Sorry for the importunity, but the author is ready to remind you once again that the 7th Wehrmacht TD traveled all that way on light Czech tanks and captured French trucks, which on our dirt roads turned from a motorized infantry vehicle into an object for pushing. Already in the first three weeks of the war, the 7th TD traveled 700 km (counting in a straight line) from the border to Yartsevo, **which is slightly more than the distance from Grodno to Berlin.**

It is strange, but communist historians have always considered **both inevitable, natural and the only possible one and the other:** both the fact that the 7th German Panzer Division was already at Yartsevo on July 15, and the fact that the 11th MK, which surpasses it in all respects, not only did not reach Berlin (or at least Merkina), but also ended its existence in three days of fighting near Grodno. But at first glance, it seems surprising and implausible that the German division, armed only with light tanks with bulletproof armor, was able to "pass through the ranks" of dozens of Soviet rifle divisions armed with hundreds of 45-mm anti-tank guns, guaranteed to penetrate the armor of the Pz-38 (t) both on the forehead and on the side, "both in the tail and in the mane". It would seem that with such a ratio of "shield and sword", a deep raid of German tanks should have ended in their complete extermination.

Everything, however, is not so simple. A tank is just a tool, and the result of its use depends primarily on the tactics of use, and more precisely, on the correspondence of this tactic to the technical characteristics of weapons. The "hopeless" at first glance relationship between the thickness of the armor of a light tank and the armor penetration of an artillery shell is such only in a situation where a lone tank is standing on a field as smooth as a table and waiting for a shell to hit it. In a real battle, there are several

otherwise.

First, the tank is moving. Even a T-26 crawling slowly across a rain-soaked field will overcome the last 600 m (it is almost impossible to hit a moving tank from a greater distance) to the firing positions of an anti-tank gun in 3 minutes. Theoretically, the calculation of an anti-tank gun can fire 10-15 rounds per minute. But this is if you do not aim, but simply "peel into the white light." Realistically, and taking into account the fact that recoil after a shot knocks down the aim, gunners have no more than 5-10 shots at their disposal. But the tank doesn't just crawl across the field, it crawls and shoots. The chances of the parties in the "duel" of a tank and an anti-tank gun are by no means the same. An armor-piercing projectile whistling one centimeter from the tank turret will not do him any harm, while a fragmentation projectile (even if it is a small-caliber 45-mm Soviet tank gun 20K projectile), which exploded at a distance of several meters from the firing position, will inevitably force the gun shut up. Therefore, 5-10 shots, which we mentioned above, in a real battle are an unattainable dream for calculating an anti-tank gun - after the very first shots, the tank crew (well-trained and trained crew) will detect a firing gun and a couple of fragmentation shells will brush the gun off the face of the earth.

From these simple considerations, it follows that the simplest and most effective way to break through anti-tank defenses is the world-old principle of concentration, basic to all military affairs. A tank division deployed in battle formation along a front of 2-3 km, confidently breaks through the defenses of a rifle (infantry) regiment, which at the beginning of the war had only 12 anti-tank guns. Even if the defenders manage to transfer their reserve to the breakthrough area in the shortest possible time (36

anti-tank 37-mm guns in the anti-tank battalion of the infantry division of the Wehrmacht), they will not be able to stop the attack of two to three hundred tanks. Losses of a certain number of tanks are inevitable in this case, but a breakthrough of the defense will also be inevitable. This "some number" can be minimized (if not even zero) by artillery support for a tank attack. It is the massive

artillery fire - paradoxical as it sounds - that plays the role of "additional armor" that allows light tanks with bulletproof armor to survive on the battlefield. The word "massive" appeared in the previous phrase not for the beauty of the syllable. The howitzer fires loose indirect fire, and it takes many, many rounds to fire before one of the rounds explodes near an enemy anti-tank gun emplacement. As mentioned above, according to the pre-war standards of artillery of the Red Army, from 70 to 90 shells of a 122-mm howitzer were required to destroy one anti-tank gun. However, there are no howitzers in the tank regiment, but they are in the artillery regiment of the tank (motorized) division. In other words, **interaction is needed**. A very simple word, with a very clear meaning, on which almost everything depends in battle.

Field Regulations of the Red Army PU-39 categorically demanded: *"An attack by tanks of the front line must in all cases be provided with artillery support and is not allowed without it."* But interaction with artillery alone is not enough. We need reconnaissance, we need stable communications, adjustment of artillery fire, we need support from our own infantry, and much more that turns cannons, tanks, machine guns into a single military mechanism. The most important "detail" of this "mechanism" was, is and will be the commander. Trained, experienced, courageous commander. In the presence of such a commander and with well-functioning interaction with infantry and artillery, a tank formation, armed with only light tanks with bulletproof armor, pierced the infantry defenses of the summer 1941 model with iron inevitability. Dear reader, all of the above should not be taken

as a continuation of the fable about the fox and grapes. Of course, with impenetrable tanks, it is even better to conduct an offensive. And it is not at all accidental that, while preparing for the Great War, "invariably

peace-loving" Stalin's empire began to re-equip its army with new tanks with anti-ballistic armor. But to declare the absence (or a small number) of such tanks **as an exhaustive objective reason** for the lightning defeat of a large mechanized formation (which the 11th MK was on the morning of June 22, 1941) is at least absurd. Tanks don't fight. Tankers and their commanders are fighting. It is in their actions (or inaction), and not in millimeters of armor and kilometers of overhaul run, that the reason for what happened in the summer of 1941 with the Red Army should be sought. Of course, this is much more difficult - if only because there are very few documentary or memoir sources, many are classified to this day, the available documents are often contradictory and unreliable. But all this cannot serve as an excuse for replacing the study of history with the endless repetition of ritual incantations about "hopelessly outdated tanks" ... We will begin the analysis of documents related to the history of the defeat of the 11th MK, we will begin with the already mentioned "political report" of the political department of the corps, signed regimental commissar A.P. Andreev July 15, 1941 First of all, you should pay attention to the date of signing the document. July 15, 1941 Pavlov and his "accomplices" have already been arrested, but the trial has not yet taken place. The commanders who remained at large, who were directly related to the catastrophic defeat of the troops

of the Western Front, feel behind their backs a distinct whiff of the execution cellars of the NKVD. Today we know that the defeat will be attributed to the "surprise attack" and "obsolete tanks", but in July 1941 no one knew this. People who remembered 1937 could and should have expected the worst for themselves, and this could not but affect the content and intonations of the aforementioned "political report", in which there is not a drop of politics, but there is a long list of "good reasons" . It is not for us to judge the commissars of 1941, but it is simply necessary for a historian to take these circumstances into account. The entire course of hostilities of the 11th MK is described in the "Political report"

literally like this:

"... On the first day, i.e. from the moment of the German aircraft raid on Volkovysk at 4.00 22.6, there was no communication with the headquarters of the 3rd Army and the headquarters of the district

it was, and parts of the corps set out independently in the Grodno, Sokulka, Indura region according to the developed cover plan ...

In connection with the withdrawal of the rifle units of the 4th SC, the entire burden of hostilities fell on the units of the 11th MK, both to cover the withdrawal of units of the 4th SC, and to delay the advance of the Germans; the motorized rifle regiment of the 29th TD, by order of the commander-3, was in its reserve for combating airborne assaults in the Grodno region, and the division fought without infantry and artillery, suffering particularly heavy losses from

enemy anti-tank artillery. During the 22nd and 23.6th parts of the corps fought on the front of the Grooms, Novy Dvor, Dombrovo. Under enemy pressure, by 24.6, parts of the corps withdrew to the Grodno (Folesh), Kuznitsa, Sokulka front, holding the front to the west of the highway and

the Grodno-Bialystok railway (see Map No. 2. - M.S.). In connection with the rapid retreat to the east from Grodno of the units operating north of the Neman River, the enemy tried to force the Neman River with the corps units reaching the rear. But all attempts by the Germans to force the Neman River were repulsed. To hold the advance of the enemy, by order of the army, on 26.6, two motorized battalions of the 204th MD were thrown across the Lunno to the line of the Kotra River. The 1st Rifle

Battalion, by order of the corps commander, was thrown out to hold the bridge at Lunno. The heavy losses suffered during the battles from 22 to 26.6, both by personnel and materiel, made the corps ineffective. In tank divisions, no more than 300-400 people remained (i.e., no more than 5% of the initial number of personnel. - M.S.), and in a motorized division - one incomplete battalion per regiment, tanks - up to 30 units. and up to 20 armored vehicles. All the small rear divisions were burned or shot down by enemy aircraft, which literally chased individual vehicles.

That's all that Commissar Andreev could tell about the death of the corps.

*The most meaningful and important is that which in
There is no*

"politicization". Firstly, it does not contain even the slightest confirmation of V. Suvorov's visions about how "Soviet tankers were shot even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured wi

crews." At the time of the notorious "surprise attack", the commanders of the 11th MK, even without communication with higher headquarters, simply took out "red packets" with cover plans from the safes and, as can be judged from the document, with virtually no losses in the shortest possible time (3-7 hours) went to their assigned deployment areas.

Secondly, the text does not contain any intelligible information about the enemy, in battles with which the corps lost 9/10 personnel and equipment in 4 days. But in this aspect, Commissar Andreev turned out to be much more decent than later historians, who filled their junk books with descriptions of some kind of "oncoming battles with heavy German tanks" that allegedly

took place near Grodno. Thirdly, there is not a single mention in the text of the existence of KMG Boldin (which formally included the 11th MK); there are no reports of interaction with the tank divisions of the 6th mechanized corps, which (according to the reports of their commanders) fought a battle on June 24-25 in the area of Sokulka, Kuznitsa, Indura, i.e. literally "a few steps" from the units of the 11th mechanized corps, which - according to Commissar Andreev - held the Sokulka-Forge line, at least until the

end of the day on June 24 ... Now let's move on to what is in the "political report". The poorly concealed claims against the infantry of the 4th Rifle Corps (4th Rifle Corps), which opened the front and thereby forced the mechanized corps to engage in an uncharacteristic business of "covering the withdrawal" and "delaying the advance of the Germans", are most likely justified. In accordance with the pre-war plans of the high command of the Red Army, the troops of the Western Front were to deliver the main blow in the south-western direction, along the Sedlec-Demblin line, "to go to the river. Vistula and moving parts to capture Radom "(see Map No. 3). Accordingly, the section of the 3rd Army (the northern base of the Bialystok ledge) seemed to be a passive section of defense. The minimum forces were allocated to it: the 4th SC consisting of three divisions and the

It should be clarified that according to the plan for covering the mobilization and operational deployment of the troops of the Western Special Military District, the 24th Rifle Division and the 21st

consisting of two infantry divisions. These formations were supposed to occupy and equip the rear defensive line on the eastern bank of the river. Neman in the strip from Druskininkai to Lunno (see Map No. 2). However, in real history, none of this happened - the mysterious and to this day interpretable foreign policy "games" of Stalin led to the fact that the cover plans were not brought into action. As a result, on the morning of June 22, against five enemy infantry divisions, only two rifle divisions of the 4th SC (27th Rifle Division and 56th Rifle Division) held the defense in the area of the Suwalki salient. The third division of the corps (85th rifle division) was in the second echelon, near the northern suburbs of Grodno. There were no other rifle formations in the troops of the 3rd Army of the Western Front. The blow of three infantry divisions of the 8th Wehrmacht Army Corps [161, 28, 8th Infantry Division] literally swept away the 56th Infantry Division, stretching along the front from

Lipsk to Druskininkai. Already at 10.15 on June 22, the Combat Report of the Headquarters of the 3rd Army No. 03 reported: *"The enemy broke through our troops and captured Sopotskin, Golysh and Lipsk ... From Sopotskin and Lipsk, our units retreat to Grodno ..."* [186, p. 138]. Lost control and demoralized units could not gain a foothold either on the line of defensive structures of the Grodno fortified area (by June 1, 1941, 98 pillboxes were built and another 606 were under construction), or on the natural boundary of the Neman River. At 13.00 on June 22, the Combat Report of the Headquarters of the Western Front No. 005 stated that the enemy (it was the 161st Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht) had crossed the Neman south of Druskininkai [186, p. 18]. By this time, the enemy's 256th infantry division had reached the Dombrovo-Lipsk front and was advancing with advance units on Novy Dvor. In the protocol of the interrogation of the commander of the Western Front, D.G. Pavlov, we read: *"In the afternoon of June*

22, Kuznetsov (commander of the 3rd Army. - M.S.) announced with a tremor in his voice that only a number remained from the 56th Infantry Division ..." [67].

Thus, the possibility of organizing the interaction of tank units of the 11th mechanized corps with the infantry of the 4th SC was initially violated. Moreover, the commander of the 3rd Army withdrew from the 29th Panzer Division its "own" motorized rifle regiment to fight the mythical "airborne troops", and the 85th Rifle Division (4th SC) and

The 204th motorized division (11th MK) was taken to the line of the Lososna River (south of Grodno). As a result of this command, the tank units of the 11th MK "fought without infantry and artillery." In this situation, the success or failure of the impetuous, but, alas, unprepared and 11th mechanized corps, unorganized, the success or failure counterstrike depended solely on what determined of a cavalry raid in the wars of the previous century. If the defenders were seized by panic, if the commanders were unable to cope with this panic, then the felling of the fugitives began - the most destructive method of action for the cavalry. If the commanders in these decisive minutes of the battle held control and subordinates in their hands, then the practically defenseless equestrian lava was mercilessly exterminated by artillery and machine guns of the defenders. The same thing, but only adjusted for other technical means of combat, should have happened with the mass of light tanks, deprived of the support of their infantry and artillery. Thanks to the efforts of modern local historians from the city of Grodno, we have at our disposal the memoirs of the chief of staff of the 29th Panzer Division N.M. Kalanchuk, commander

of the 57th tank regiment of the same division I.G. Cheryapkin and senior political instructor A.Ya. Marchenko, who from the first hours of the war served as commander of the 59th tank regiment of the 29th TD. (83rd, 184th). In their presentation, events unfolded as follows. N.M. Kalanchuk: "... *The motorcyclist brought an order from the commander of the 11th mechanized corps, which indicated that the corps, with the forces of the 29th tank division, was launching a counterattack on Sopotskin, Suwalki;*

to the left from

Sokolok and Indur, the 33rd Panzer Division launches a counterattack in the direction of Lipsk, Augustow, Suwalki ... The beginning of the performance is 09.45 06/22/1941.

*When the units began to carry out the order, a report was received from the reconnaissance battalion, which stated that **40 tanks and about an enemy infantry regiment in armored personnel carriers** (hereinafter emphasized by me. - M.S.) broke through the rifle units of the 4th rifle corps and moving in the direction of Sopotskin and Grodno ... The division, not reaching Sopotskin, at the turn of Doiki, Golyinka, Lipsk, turned into battle formations, entered into a fierce battle with T-III tanks and enemy motorized infantry. IN*

In this battle, our T-34 and KV tanks especially showed themselves: acting in front of our tank combat formations, they began to shoot enemy tanks and crush them like nuts, without incurring any losses. Following them, tanks T-26, BT-5 and BT-7 dealt crushing blows to enemy tanks and crushed armored personnel carriers with enemy infantry.

This battle lasted about 35 minutes, armored personnel carriers and tanks of the enemy, including our T-26 and BT-5, burned like candles, the battle area was covered with solid smoke. Our tankers, despite their weak armor, fought heroically, sparing no life, and heroically died in battle the death of the brave. Finally, the enemy infantry jumped out of the burning armored personnel carriers and were shot at direct fire from the cannons and machine guns of our glorious tankers. When our T-34s and KVs crushed the column and battle formations of the enemy, the enemy began to retreat and was driven back with heavy losses in tanks, armored personnel carriers and infantry. Our tank regiments with a reconnaissance battalion drove the enemy north of Sopotskin into the forest. In this battle, the enemy lost

*34 armored personnel carriers, 21 T-III light tanks, up to two infantry battalions. **Our losses are 27 T-26 and BT tanks. KV and T-34 remained unharmed**, but all in the holes (dents from shells). Subsequently, by 12 o'clock the enemy brought up artillery and tanks. Parts of the division, being heavily affected by aviation and **superior enemy forces**, retreated to the eastern bank of the river. Lososna, where they entrenched themselves and, repelling the fierce attacks of the enemy, defended themselves until June 25 ... " I.G. Cheryapkin:*

"... The

divisional commander ordered our regiment to move in a dispersed column in combat readiness for a meeting battle in the direction of Konyukha, Golyinka ... Intelligence sent forward reported that up to a battalion of enemy motorized infantry with tanks appeared in the Golyinka area ... Moving on, we soon came into direct contact with the enemy.

First, there was a clash with enemy intelligence, and then the advance detachment of the advancing Nazis appeared. In a short battle, several German tanks and armored personnel carriers were destroyed, and the rest retreated. And immediately above the battle formations of the regiment

enemy aircraft appeared, subjecting us to a fierce bombardment. During this raid, the chief of staff of the regiment, Major Petukhov, was seriously wounded, who was evacuated to the rear.

After the bombardment, **at least an infantry battalion** moved towards us, accompanied by tanks and armored personnel carriers. The Nazis marched with their sleeves rolled up and the collars of their uniforms unbuttoned, aimlessly firing from machine guns. Needless to say, it made an impression. I even had a thought, no matter how our battle formations would not falter. I ordered the Germans to come closer and open fire for sure. They did not expect serious resistance from us, and when the fire from tank guns and machine guns fell upon them, they were stunned. The infantry immediately lay down. The ensuing tank duel ended not in favor of the Nazis. When **more than half of the German tanks and armored personnel carriers caught fire**, the enemy began to retreat. The regiment also suffered losses. Having gasoline engines and weak armor, the T-26 and

BT tanks flared up from the first hit of a projectile. Only **KV and T-34 remained invulnerable**. The regiment advanced to the line Perstun, Golyinka, where it met a strong anti-tank defense of the enemy, and also began to be subjected to continuous attacks from the air. **In the afternoon, we retreated to Grodno by order.**

On June 23 and 24, the regiment as part of the division fought with the advancing enemy southwest and south of Grodno. By the end of the third day of the war, less than half of the tanks remained in the regiment ... "

AND I.

Marchenko: "... Since the commander of our regiment for some reason was absent in the concentration area, I was ordered to lead the regiment into battle. Until now, I cannot explain to myself why the choice of division commander fell on me.

At about 10.30 our column, numbering more than 50 tanks, set out across the river on the road to Sopotskin. Halfway to the border, **we met with enemy tanks and armored personnel carriers** and immediately entered into battle with them. I also remember how our high-speed T-26 tanks rushed at the enemy T-III and T-IV, how German and our tanks began to flash in front of and on the sides of my "thirty-four". Ours more often, because their armor was twice as thin as the German ones.

I didn't remember how many times they attacked us, but Andrey (the mechanic driver of the T-34 tank, on which Marchenko fought. - M.S.) later claimed that we repulsed more than ten attacks. The armor of our tank was littered with potholes and dents from enemy shells. We were deafened by the roar of their explosions, by the bombs that now and then rained down on us from the sky in between attacks.

Another regiment of our division, commanded by Major Cheryapkin, also fought hard on our right. By evening

we were forced to retreat to Grodno. There were few cars left in service. A shell from a 105-mm cannon hit my tank, damaged the turning mechanism and disabled the gun. The car caught fire, but it was extinguished.

We ran out of ammunition, we ran out of fuel. There was no supply. In the evening we learned that, by order of the army command, the troops were leaving Grodno, and our division was to cover their withdrawal. However, we have not received any specific instructions. I decided to return to the regiment's location in order to replenish with everything I needed. In the warehouses, we managed to find some food, ammunition, and refuel.

Attempts to contact the division headquarters were unsuccessful.

There was no one from the command in the city. We decided to move to Lida (90 km in a straight line from Grodno) *following the retreating units.*

Thus ended the first day of the war for us. In the future, I had the opportunity to participate in battles in the Lida region, in the activities of the party and Komsomol underground in the Polotsk region, and in May 1942 to lead a partisan detachment ... "The

memories of the three participants in the events coincide, as we see, in almost everything. Unfortunately, they also coincide in the memorized retelling of Soviet propaganda myths. The Germans in the summer of 1941 "should" have outnumbered the Red Army in tanks and drove around in armored personnel carriers - and here are three eyewitnesses unanimously talking about German tanks near Grodno, and not just about tanks, but about the T-III (Pz-III). Finally, the story of how "fascists with rolled up sleeves and unbuttoned uniform collars" in the amount of one infantry battalion launched a "psychic attack" on a Soviet tank (!!!) regiment looks completely farcical.

In fact, there was not a single Wehrmacht tank formation south of Druskininkai. The 12th Panzer Division from the 3rd Panzer Group closest to the scene of events approached Merkina at noon on June 22, i.e. was at a distance of 50-60 km from the battlefield near Sopotskin - Grodno. There were no tanks (and even more so - Pz-III medium tanks, which were not even enough to equip the tank divisions of the first echelon of the invasion armies) as part of the Wehrmacht infantry divisions. The only thing that could be mistaken for a German "tank" in the heat of battle was "assault guns", six (189, 191, 192, 201, 203, 210th) battalions of which (three batteries of six self-propelled guns each) were attached to the infantry divisions of the German Army Group Center. In addition, there were two more battalions (529th and 561st) of self-propelled "tank destroyers" (a Czech 47-mm anti-tank gun on the chassis of a Pz-I light tankette), a total of six batteries of 9 "fighters" in each. Thus, thirty-one infantry divisions of Army Group Center accounted **for an average of five self-propelled guns** of various types. Average. Perhaps in some division there could be two batteries (i.e. 12 "assault guns"), but certainly not 40 Pz-III and Pz-IV tanks. As for armored personnel carriers, they existed only in the old Soviet cinema about the war. German infantry

moved on foot, the motorized infantry of motorized and tank divisions - on assorted trucks, bread vans and captured buses. The Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, F. Halder, in his famous diary (entry dated May 22, 1941) notes that the 17th Panzer Division (2nd Panzer Group) has 240 different types of vehicles. By the beginning of the invasion of the USSR, the Wehrmacht's tank divisions had about 650 half-track armored personnel carriers "Khanomag" (Sd.Kfz. 251). And this is not surprising, given that in 1939-1940. Germany's industry (for which the whole of Europe allegedly "worked") produced only 569 armored personnel carriers. In the entire 3rd tank group of the Wehrmacht there were three companies on armored personnel carriers (26 armored personnel carriers in each). In order to put all the infantry of tank and motorized divisions on the Khanomagi in June of the 41st, the Germans had to have not 650, but about 25 thousand armored personnel carriers. This quantity has not been produce

all five years of the war (the actual output at the end of 1943 was 6.5 thousand) [188, p.

262]. Of course, not only in the Soviet Union, military propaganda churned out heroic myths. So, for example, in 1942 (that is, directly during the war), Horst Slesina's book "Soldiers Against Death and the Devil" ("Soldaten gegen Todt und Teufel. Unser Kampf in der Sowietunion. Eine soldatische Deutung") was published in Germany). The author was a staff member of the Wehrmacht propaganda service, so it is not worth looking for exact figures and true facts in his book. This book, however, is of great value to the modern historian, since at its beginning there is a chapter "Tank battle in front of Grodno", which describes the battle of German infantry against Soviet tanks near the village of Konyukha. And this is nothing more than the same battle that at noon on June 22, 1941, the 29th Panzer Division of the 11th Mechanized Corps fought with the 8th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht. And although H. Slesipa ends his story with an absolutely fantastic apparition that *"five Soviet tank regiments with almost 600 tanks attacked parts of our division"*, the very description of the battle - despite all the "picture" propaganda pathos - is quite

realistic: *"... Defense preparations end in a few seconds. The officers rush to their units... Shaking and rattling, our assault guns drive up. These are heavy, massive tanks without a turret, with gun barrels protruding menacingly. Although they are few, with only one battery, they are the heaviest weapons in anti-tank combat. This is the first battle of their crews, but they go into battle with calmness and faith. They are fully convinced of the superiority of their weapons..."*

The anti-tank teams took up their well-camouflaged positions despite their haste. Assault guns approach the road on the right and left. Now we must wait... We hear the rumble of engines and the grinding and clanging of tank tracks. They're rolling! They are painted earthy brown, with long gun barrels - five, six and a few more ... These are light and medium tanks plus several armored cars ... Closer, even closer. Now every detail is visible. Their towers are turning because they are looking for us.

Roaring, whining and barking shots! Tracer projectiles from anti-tank guns reach the enemy with their own

fiery fingers. Lower thunder of assault guns. Machine guns with special bullets thresh on the sides of the tanks. The forward tanks receive a warm welcome. The first two shells from our two assault guns hit the most advanced heavy tank and simply tear off its turret with amazing force. She was thrown a few meters. A high column of fire, the flash and impact of exploding ammunition, tank gas tanks soar into the sky - at this moment, five columns of smoke and fire rise in front of us. Five Soviet tanks were literally shredded and torn apart

into parts.

New Goals! The remaining Soviet tanks joined the battle and stubbornly fired at our positions through their destroyed and knocked out tanks. The raised dust, gunpowder smoke and smoke from burning oil hide us. The Russians fire furiously with machine guns and cannons. The anti-tank gun on the right side of the road was hit. Fragments, steel and blood and mud fall on the yellow sand... Pictures are imprinted in the brain with great clarity. A Russian tank rolls forward: 40 meters, 30 meters... Why doesn't the assault gun fire? Fear chokes the throat. A devastating blow - fire, armor plates, a gun barrel, human bodies, burning oil and dense, black smoke that graciously hides a picture of horror ...

This infernal noise lasts only a few minutes. The fire subsides because we have no more goals. The last tanks turned around and fled. Eleven burning torches, engulfed in huge columns of smoke, litter the field..." (translated by D. Lutik) [184].

To what "common denominator" can all these disparate and contradictory memories of the participants in the events be reduced? First, there was a fierce battle on June 22 between the German infantry and the 29th Panzer Division in the Sopotskin-Grodno region. In this battle, Soviet tankers acted without the support of aviation, artillery and their own infantry (in the story of X. Slesina there is not a single mention of artillery shelling of German positions or the appearance of Soviet infantry on the battlefield). The 8th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht (a personnel division of the "first wave" that fought from the first days of World War II) met an avalanche of Soviet tanks not with panicked screams, not with the backs of fleeing soldiers, but with fire from everything that could shoot ("machine guns with special bullets *thresh along the sides of the tanks*").

The logical result was the failure of the tank attack and heavy losses (*"the division fought without infantry and artillery, suffering especially heavy losses from enemy anti-tank artillery"*).

It is possible to estimate the real size of losses only tentatively. The chief of staff of the 29th TD writes about the loss of 27 tanks. X. Slesina embellishes her narrative with a picture of "eleven burning torches engulfed in huge columns of smoke." In the report of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the 9th German Army (June 23, 17:40) we read: "On June 22, 180 tanks were knocked out, of which only the 8th Infantry Division destroyed 80 tanks in the battles for Grodno" [187, p. 34]. Dividing the number 80 by the standard "overestimation factor" for combat reports, equal to three, we get exactly 27 wrecked tanks, which N.M. writes about in his memoirs. Kalanchuk.

It is much more difficult to determine the real composition of the Soviet tank units that took part in the battle of the 29th Panzer Division with the German infantry. According to A.Ya. Marchenko (acting commander of the 59th tank regiment), *"our column, numbering **more than 50 tanks**, set out across the river on the road to Sopotskin."* Commander of the 57th Tank Regiment I.G. Cheryapkin at the beginning of his memoirs writes that *"there were **about 100 tanks** in the regiment, including about a dozen KV and T-34s."* N.M. Kalanchuk, chief of staff of the 29th TD, claims that "the division's staffing with military equipment and weapons was very low. For example, about 66% of tanks, and then old models ... "But 66% of the regular strength of the Red Army tank division of the summer 1941 model is 248 tanks! Machines of new types, as N.M. Kalanchuk, there were 18 units in the division ("12 T-34 tanks, 6 KV tanks").

However - and this is the most surprising - in the description of the battle made by X. Slesina, it is absolutely impossible to detect **one and a half - two hundred** Soviet tanks. We are talking about at most **two to three dozen** combat vehicles. There are no T-34 and KV tanks in his story, which (according to Kalanchuk), *"acting ahead of our tank battle formations, shot enemy tanks and crushed them like nuts, without incurring any losses."* And this is very strange, since the Wehrmacht propagandist should not have missed the opportunity to paint the battle of German soldiers with "Russian armored monsters." And they (monsters) really appear on the pages of his

books (*"Tanks! Giant tanks like we've never seen before! Steel giants rumble down the hill at us! Russian 52-ton tanks with a 15-centimeter cannon! Horror paralyzes us. Light anti-tank guns do not bring any effect. Shells bounce off steel sides, like rubber balls..."*) - but this is a description of another battle (most likely - with units of the 6th mechanized corps that approached the Kuznitsa - Indura area on June 24, 1941).

It is even more difficult to reconstruct what happened to the 29th Panzer Division AFTER the first battle. The only thing that is absolutely obvious is that all three of its participants (the chief of staff of the division and the commanders of tank regiments) write about the battle on June 22 in detail and excitedly, but the events of June 23-25 are mentioned somehow in passing, in a hasty patter. And from the memoirs of the senior political officer A.Ya. Marchenko completely follows that **the first battle was also the last** - having not found any authorities or orders in Grodno, the 59th tank regiment "moved after the retreating units" to Lida. In any case, there is no clear explanation of how the loss of 30-40 tanks in one of the three divisions of the corps turned into the loss of 90% of the personnel and military equipment in three days, which " *made the corps ineffective*

The only indisputable fact is that the counterattack of the 11th MK took place in isolation from the actions of KMG Boldin (and General Boldin himself) and ended with the complete defeat of the corps, the loss of all military equipment, most of the privates and commanders. On July 14, 1941, south of Bobruisk (350 km east of Grodno), only a group of several hundred people left the encirclement, but led by the commander of the 11th mechanized corps, Major General Mostovenko.

REPORT S.V. BORZILOV

Fortunately for historians, the battle path of the 6th mechanized corps (4th and 7th tank divisions, 29th motorized division) is slightly better illuminated. In the bowels of the "archival Gulag" a document survived and was published at the end of the 80s ("Military History Journal", No. 11/1988): Report of the commander of the 7th Panzer Division, Major General S.V. Borzilov to the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army of August 4, 1941. At least a few words should be said

separately about the author of this document. Semyon Vasilyevich Borzilov, by the time the Soviet-German war began, could rightfully be considered one of the most experienced and illustrious tank commanders of the Red Army. During the Finnish War, brigade commander Borzilov commanded the 20th heavy tank brigade, which broke through the "Mannerheim Line" in the area of the infamous "height 65.5". The command of the Red Army then highly appreciated the role of the 20th tank brigade and its commander. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 21 tankmen, including Borzilov himself. Without denying the unambiguously criminal nature of the war unleashed by Stalin, it should be recognized that Soviet tankers gained in it a unique experience of breaking through the long-term fortifications of the enemy, moreover, on a completely "anti-tank"

terrain.

The undoubted merit of the commander of the 20th TB should also include the very small losses suffered by the personnel of the unit entrusted to him. For three months of fighting in the most difficult natural and climatic conditions, the 20th tank brigade lost 169 people killed and 338 wounded [8]. Nothing at all - in comparison with the fact that the total losses of the Red Army in that shameful Stalinist adventure exceeded 330 thousand people [35].

Borzilov's report, despite its small volume, contains so much valuable information that it is worth reading very, very much.

attentively:

1. On June 22, 1941, the division was staffed in personnel: 98 percent for privates, 60 percent for junior officers. And

command staff by 80 percent. Materiel: heavy tanks - 51, medium tanks - 150, BT-5-7 - 125, T-26 - 42 units.

2. By June 22, the division was provided with combat equipment: 76-mm shells - 1 bq (ammunition), there were no armor-piercing shells of 76 mm, 45-mm shells - 1.5 bk, gasoline B-70 and KB-70 - 3 refueling, diesel fuel — 1 refueling.

3. On June 22, units of the division continued to carry out the combat training plan and were deployed: (the following is a list of units and the name of the places southwest of Bialystok. - M.S.) I did not know about the alleged attack of the German army, although the units were ready for battle.

4. On June 20, 1941, the corps commander held a meeting with the command of divisions, at which the task was set to increase combat readiness, i.e. it was ordered to finally equip the shells and magazines, put them in tanks, strengthen the protection of parks and warehouses, check again the areas where units were assembled on combat alert, and establish radio contact with the headquarters of the corps. Moreover, the corps commander warned that these events should be carried out without fuss, that no one should be told about this, and that studies should continue according to plan. All these instructions were completed on time.

5. On June 22, at 2 o'clock, a password was received through a communications delegate about a combat alert with the opening of a "red package" (this term in the Red Army denoted a package with an operational plan for combat operations of a unit or formation, which the commander had the right to open only by order of a higher command. - M.S.). After 10 minutes, a combat alert was announced to units of the division, and at 04:30, units of the division concentrated at the assembly point on combat alert. 6.

Fighting 7th TD. On June 22, 1941, by order of the corps commander, the division conducted reconnaissance battalion along the Warsaw highway to the west, reconnaissance worked well. In addition, she had the task of restoring communication with parts of the 1st SC. On the first day of the war, the division had no more deliveries until 22:00.

7. At 22:00 on June 22, the division received an order to move to a new concentration area - st. Valpa (east of Bialystok) and the subsequent task: to destroy the tank division that broke through to the Bialystok area. The division, following the order, encountered traffic jams created on all roads due to the disorderly retreat of the rear of the army

from Bialystok (road service was not established). The division, being on the march and in the area of concentration from 04:00 to 09:00 and from 11:00 to 14:00 on June 23, was under enemy air strikes all the time. During the period of the march and stay in the area of concentration up to 14 hours, the division had losses: 63 tanks were knocked out, all the rear of the regiments were defeated, the rear of the 13th regiment was

especially affected. 8. The enemy tank division was not in the Velsk area, due to which the division was not used. New information came in: an enemy tank division broke through between Grodno and Sokulka. At 1400 hours on June 23, the division received a new task - to move in the direction of Sokulka - Kuznitsa, destroy the tank division that had broken through with access to the assembly area south of Grodno (about 140 km). Fulfilling the task, in the morning of June 24, the division concentrated on the line for the attack south of Sokulka and Staroe Dubno. Intelligence found that there was no enemy tank division, but there were small groups of tanks interacting with infantry and cavalry. On June 24-25, the division, following the order of the corps commander

and marshal comrade Kulik, struck 14 tp Old Dubno and further Grodno, 13 tp Kuznitsa and further Grodno from the west, where up to two infantry battalions and up to two artillery batteries were destroyed. After completing the task, parts of the division concentrated in the area of Kuznitsa and Old Dubno, while parts of the division lost 18 tanks, burned out and stuck in the swamps. On June 25-26, until 21 o'clock, the division fought a defensive battle in cooperation with the 29th Motor Rifle Division and the 36th Infantry Division (one of the two cavalry divisions of the 6th Cavalry Division), struck in front of the front of the 128th Motorized Rifle Division, 29th Motorized Rifle Division and 36th Motorized Rifle Division

th cd. 9. In parts of the division, fuel and lubricants were running out, it was not possible to refuel due to the lack of containers and head warehouses, however, it was possible to get one gas station from the burned-out warehouses Kuznitsa and m. Krinki (in general, fuels and lubricants were extracted as anyone could). By the end of the day on June 25, an order was received from the corps commander to withdraw beyond the river. Svisloch, but they

performed it only on a special signal. According to preliminary data, on the night of June 26, 4th TD of the 6th mechanized corps moved beyond the river. Svisloch, as a result of which the flank of the 36th Cavalry Division was opened. By t

reserve went on the offensive. At 21:00, units of the 36th Cavalry Division and the 128th Motor Rifle Division of the 29th Motor Rifle Division began to retreat indiscriminately. I took measures to restore the situation, but this was not successful. I gave the order to cover the retreating units of the 29th Motor Rifle Division and the 36th Cavalry Division in the area of Cape Krinki, made a second attempt to detain the retreating units, where I managed to detain the 128th Motorized Rifle Regiment (this is not an enemy one, this is our regiment from our 6th mechanized corps still trying to detain Borzilov. - M.S), and on the night of June 27 he crossed the river. Svisloch east of Cape Krinki (this was the beginning of a general disorderly retreat).

At this time, communication with the headquarters of the corps was broken. Communication was restored by the end of June 27 at the crossings near Volkovysk. Parts of the division all the time from the Forge, Sokulka and to Slonim fought with the pursuing enemy airborne units. On June 29, at 11 o'clock, with the remnants of materiel (3 T-34 vehicles) and a detachment of infantry and cavalry, he approached the forests east of Slonim, where he fought on June 29 and 30. June 30 at 22 o'clock moved with a detachment to the forests and further to the Pinsk swamps along the route Bulka, Velichkovichi, Postoly, st. Old woman, Gomel, Vyazma (800 km east of Bialystok. - M.S). 10. The entire materiel

was left on the territory occupied by the enemy, from Bialystok to Slonim. Abandoned materiel was rendered unusable. The material part was left due to the lack of fuel and lubricants and a repair fund. Crews joined the retreating infantry.

Such is the "short course" of the history of the defeat of the most powerful tank formation. We will now try to take a breath and sum up, for a start, the simplest, arithmetic results of what we have read. By the start of hostilities, the 7th Panzer Division had

368 tanks, including 200 of the latest T-34s and KVs (that is, more than in all tank divisions of the Leningrad and Baltic military districts combined). Even before the start of the first enemy air raids, the division left the place of permanent deployment and did not suffer any losses from the "surprise attack". In parentheses, we note that even on March 19, 1999 (i.e. 10 years after the publication of Borzilov's report), Krasnaya Zvezda described the first day of the war of the 6th mechanized corps in its usual style: "Tank tanks were blazing with *fire*

parks. After rushing about for some time in powerless despair, almost unarmed (???) tankers, together with infantry and border guards, retreated, as they used to say in the old days, to retreat ... German pilots ruthlessly (the country's main army newspaper believes that those who "retreated", the enemy should have been sorry?) bombed and shot people from a strafing flight ... " In

fact, *"during the period of the march and being in the concentration area"* the 7th Panzer Division lost (judging by the report of General Borzilov - from German air strikes) **63 tanks** . The 4th Panzer Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps also suffered comparable losses at the stage of advancing to the initial area for the offensive. So, in the Operational Report of the Headquarters of the Western Front No. 08 (dated 20.00 June 27, 1941) it is said that by 18.00 June 24 the division concentrated in the area of Lebezhany, Novaya Mysh, having losses of up to 20-26% mainly due to light tanks; heavy KV tanks, as indicated in the report, even withstood direct hits from aerial bombs [186, p. 51].

During the counteroffensive on June 24-25, the 7th Panzer Division fought with enemy infantry with a strength of up to one regiment (it can be assumed that this was the 481st Infantry Regiment of the 256th Wehrmacht Infantry Division, which really fought on June 24-25 with Soviet tanks near the town of Kuznitsa), while losing only **18 tanks**, and not all of them were hit by German anti-tank artillery - several vehicles, as the divisional commander writes, simply got stuck in the swamps.

Borzilov in his report does not specify which tanks were lost. Nevertheless, knowing the real capabilities of the German aviation (which will be discussed in the following chapters) and the anti-tank artillery of the German infantry divisions (as well as the "assault gun" divisions attached to them, armed with a short-barreled 75-mm cannon), it can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that the main striking force of the division - the newest T-34 and KV tanks - remained safe and sound. In his other report (dated July 28, 1941), General Borzilov writes: *"When our tanks appeared, the enemy tanks (actually they were self-propelled" assault guns ") did not accept the battle, but hurriedly retreated ... the T-34 machine perfectly withstands blows 37-mm guns, not to mention the KV"* [28, p. 118].

Simple arithmetic leads us to the conclusion that on the morning of June 26 , **287 tanks** should still remain in the 7th Panzer Division . It's not much, but a lot. None of the 17 Wehrmacht tank divisions had such a number of tanks on June 22, 1941 (on average, there were 192 tanks per German division), not to mention the quality ... And now, after three days of retreat, with virtually no contact with the enemy (apart from the completely mythical "airborne units" that allegedly "pursued" the retreating tank division), an infantry detachment **with three tanks remains from the entire Borzilov division**. The very course of the division's combat operations deserves close attention. Two

days before the notorious "surprise attack" the division was put on high alert. In fact, in the 6th mechanized corps of the Western Front, the same thing happened as in the 3rd mechanized corps of the North-Western Front, whose commander on June 18 ordered "to put the *units on alert in accordance with the plans for raising the alert, but not to announce the alarm itself* ". With a very high degree of probability, it can be assumed that both of them were not the result of the "amateur activity" of the corps commanders (or even the commanders of the districts), but was the implementation of a directive of the highest command for the entire Red Army. The order to open the "red package" was received 2 hours BEFORE the first gun salvos thundered at the border (it is worth noting that the same time of receipt of the

order to open the "red package" - 2 am on June 22 - is contained in many other memoirs of the commanders of the Western Front). Thus, there is no need to even talk about any "sudden start of hostilities" in relation to the 6th MK. It is also noteworthy that already on the morning of June 22, without waiting for special instructions from Moscow or Minsk, the command of the 6th MK conducted reconnaissance "*along the Warsaw highway to the west*" - a fact that gives additional reason for the assumption that in the "red package " was kept not the mythical "plan for repelling aggression", but the plan for the first operations of the invasion of the territory of Poland occupied by the Germans.

The entire first day of the war, the division stood in the area of concentration - and this is absolutely correct. Main striking force

The Western Front was to be used without convulsive haste, after careful reconnaissance of the enemy, on the basis of a well-thought-out plan of action. However, instead of all this, on the basis of false panic reports, already at the end of the first day of the war (at 22.00 on June 22), the 7th TD was sent by the commander of the 10th Army, Golubev, to the south, to the city of Velsk, to fight the non-existent German tank division. Since there were simply no enemy tank units in the zone of the 10th Army, Borzilov could not find them either. Then, at 14:00 on June 23, the division is given the task of finding and destroying another mythical

enemy tank division, but this time in the exact opposite direction. Multi-kilometer columns of tanks, tractors and vehicles turned around and moved north from Velsk, to the Sokulka-Kuznitsa area (see Map No. 2). Thus, for the first two days of the war, the division "fought" against the reckless orders of the command of the 10th Army and against the disorderly retreat of the rear of the army, which cluttered all the roads of the Bialystok ledge.

Borzilov's division participated in the planned counterattack of KMG Boldin for two days (June 24 and 25). By this time, units of the 8th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht were crossing to the eastern bank of the Neman and developing an offensive against Skidel. The advanced units of the 256th Infantry Division entered the Sokulka-Kuznica line. Thus, in the area of the counterattack of the 7th and 4th tank divisions of the 6th mechanized corps, there were enemy infantry units with a total strength of no more than one infantry division, which did not have a single day to prepare an equipped line of anti-tank defense. Almost nothing was said in Borzilov's report about how the battle developed

in the Old Dubno-Kuznitsa region (in fact, the only battle in the short history of the 7th Panzer Division). It is difficult (more precisely, impossible) to understand the meaning of the phrase *"after completing the task, parts of the division concentrated in the area of Kuznitsa and Staroe Dubno"*. The immediate task was the capture of Grodno, the next - a breakthrough to the crossings on the Neman at Merkin.

The same task was carried out by the 4th Panzer Division advancing on Grodno from the Indura region. If, after the battle, the 7th TD ended up not in Grodno, but in the original area of \u200b\u200bForge - Old Dubno, then there can be no question of any "completion of the task".

According to sound logic, the oncoming battle between the German infantry and two tank divisions, armed with **more than 300 T-34 and KV tanks**, should have ended with the complete extermination of the defenders (or their stampede to Grodno and beyond the Neman). If we assume that the command of the Army Group "Center" contrived to immediately pull several hundred 88-mm anti-aircraft guns and 105-mm long-range guns into the area of \u200b\u200bthe counterattack of the 6th mechanized corps (the assumption is clearly absurd), then the Germans theoretically could have a chance to to destroy most of the tanks of the Borzilov division. In reality, neither one nor the other happened: in two days of battle, the 7th Panzer Division lost 18 tanks from enemy fire and drowned in the swamps (i.e., no more than 6% of their total number), after which it stopped attacks and returned to the

starting line. The beginning of the end of the 7th Panzer Division was the order to withdraw across the Svisloch River, received in the late evening of June 25th. This order (probably the last in his life) was given by the commander of the 6th MK, Major General Khatskilevich, following the order of the commander of the Western Front, Pavlov, who on June 25 at 16:45, on the basis of instructions from the Stavka and its representative at the headquarters of the Western Front, Marshal Shaposhnikov, sent a directive to the troops on a general withdrawal to the line of the Shchara River (80-90 km east of the Svisloch River). Good intentions - to withdraw the troops behind the natural defensive line and there to bring them into some order - did not at all

correspond to the real situation and the real condition of the troops of the front. *"Withdrawal is one of the most difficult types of maneuver."* This statutory provision (clause 423 of the Field Manual PU-39) was ignored and forgotten not only by the command of the Western Front, but also by two generations of Soviet historians. In the domestic historiography of the war, a quite stable tradition has already developed of opposing "reckless and suicidal counterattacks" to a wise and "humane" retreat. Not to mention the fact that the absurdity of such reasoning was immediately confirmed in practice (the directive to withdraw to the border of the Shchara River did not save the troops of the Western

disorderly flight that had begun by that time), they are theoretically completely untenable. Withdrawal requires

the strictest discipline, continuous and firm command and control of troops, stable communications - that is, exactly what the troops of the Western Front no longer had. A marching column (unlike troops dispersed and buried in the ground) is an ideal target for enemy aviation, so it was possible to decide on a withdrawal only if at least local and temporary superiority of Soviet aviation in the air was ensured - nothing like that in June 1941 was not (and could not be) achieved. The very fact of withdrawal inevitably demoralizes the troops, turning the soldier from a fighter on the battlefield into a defenseless object for air attack and shelling of enemy artillery - this is exactly what happened in reality. Perhaps, at the beginning of the 21st century, the time has come to finally recognize the obvious fact: the order to withdraw "saved" the soldiers and commanders of the Western Front from an honest soldier's death in battle, but only to replace it with a painful death from starvation, beatings and dysentery in a German prisoner of war camp ... Returning from this simple (and bleak) theory to the history of the 7th Panzer Division, we find that it was after receiving the order to withdraw that

the following phrases appeared in Borzilov's report : *retreat ... made a second attempt to delay the retreating units ... the beginning of a general disorderly retreat ...* " It was during *the "random retreat"* that the Red Army's

best-equipped tank division turned into an infantry detachment with three tanks.

However, Borzilov's report also indicated an objective (at first glance) reason for the defeat of the division and the loss of almost three hundred tanks: "lack of fuel and lubricants." It would seem, what else is there to argue about? There is no fuel - there is no combat-ready tank division. Alas, with all due respect to the memory of the deceased general, we will not rush to conclusions, but will use a

calculator to begin with. One refueling of diesel fuel was in the division before the start of hostilities. Another received already during the fighting. Total - two

gas stations. There were three gas stations or more. Now let's translate the "gas stations" into understandable kilometers. The most outdated T-26 tank available in the 7th division had a cruising range of 170 km on one

gas station. Three gas stations - half a thousand kilometers. The most powerful and modern KB is the same 180 km (it's hard to carry 50 tons of steel). Two gas stations for diesel KB is 360 km. High-speed BTs and medium T-34s had a cruising range of 300 or more kilometers at one gas station. In fact, the 7th Panzer Division, circling randomly along the route Bialystok - Velsk - Sokulka - Volkonysh - Slonim, traveled **no more than 250 km for the entire time from June 22 to 29**. At the same time, it was completely impossible to abandon all the equipment *"due to the lack of fuel and lubricants"*.

Moreover, the territory of the Bialystok ledge was literally packed with fuel and ammunition depots. On the eve of the war, colossal reserves of fuel—264,000 tons—were concentrated on the territory of the Western OBO [68, p. 351]. Directly in the "wandering" zone of the 6th MK there were 12 (twelve) stationary fuel depots. Namely: 920 and 1040 (Bialystok), 925 and 1038 (Belsk), 923 and 1019 (Monki), 919 and 1020 (Grodno). 929 and 1033 (Mosty), 922 and 1044 (Volkovysk). The distances between these warehouses did not exceed 60-80 km (no more than two hours of driving on a broken dirt road). For the transportation of fuel in the 6th mechanized corps there were 220 tankers based on a three-axle all-wheel drive truck ZIS-6 (tank capacity 3200 liters).

A fully equipped mechanized corps for a 500 km march required 1.2 thousand tons of fuel. In other words, **on one tenth** of the fuel reserves that were next to the abandoned tanks, **the 6th MK could reach from Bialystok to Vladivostok**. Fuel, which the units of the 6th mechanized corps allegedly did not have enough to at least retreat to the east in an organized manner, was enough in abundance for the rapidly advancing ... enemy. The Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, F. Halder, in an entry dated July 1, notes that *"about one third of the fuel consumption is covered by trophy reserves."* In absolute numbers, this means that, **on average, every day** the Germans "received" on theoretically unknown to them and theoretically "destroyed during the retreat"

Soviet warehouses **for 2900 tons of fuel**. This number alone should have been enough for all the tank divisions of the Western Front in order to get out of the Bialystok "cauldron". Come out together with tanks, and not disperse in scattered groups through the forests ...

Finally, even a tank that has run out of last drops of fuel does not cease to be a powerful weapon. Especially if it is a heavy KV tank. Especially if the fighting takes place in Western Belarus. Few highways of the Bialystok ledge were a kind of "gorge in the mountains." A stone's throw from the roadside begins either a centuries-old, impenetrable forest, or a dead swamp. It will not be possible to go around an obstacle on such "gorge roads" even on a motorcycle - not to mention a car or a horse-drawn cart. And this means that 50 KV tanks from the Borzilov division, buried in the ground at crossroads, could paralyze any movement of German troops for a long time: it is impossible to go around, powerful armor cannot be penetrated by any gun in service with the German infantry division, the armament of the tank itself (long-barreled 76-mm gun) is capable of destroying any target (car, artillery tractor, armored personnel carrier, tank) that could be on the road of war in June 41st ...

As for the history of the 4th Panzer Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, it is still shrouded in obscurity to this day. Documents are lost. The division commander, Major General Potaturchev, was taken prisoner and after the end of the war, in July 1947, he died in the NKVD prison. The materials of the investigation have never been published. None of the commanders of the 4th TD who survived the war left memoirs. The only description of the "combat actions" of this division known to the author is the following fragment of the memoirs of S.A. Afanasiev, an ordinary tanker of the 8th tank

regiment of the 4th TD: *"... On the morning of June 23, German aircraft fired at us. Our tanks were the latest, every single T-34 and KV. We hid in the woods. At that time, Captain Rassadnev was still in command of our battalion, but since noon on June 23 I have not seen him, because several times that day we scattered in all directions ... We retreated through forests, swamps, along impassable roads, since all the good roads were Germans. We left Volkovysk, Slanim, Baranovichi... Not even in cor*

entered. It seems to me that the officers themselves created the panic. Before the eyes of the fighters, they tore off the officer's stripes ... So they almost reached Smolensk, they also left so much equipment there! Everyone fled, and the equipment and weapons (tanks, guns) were abandoned. I cannot tell where the fighting took place, as there were almost none. In our direction, we only broke through the German landing for one night, it was near Slonim or Stolbtsy ...” [165, p. 260]

And so, completely ineffectually and inexplicably, the counterattack of the most powerful mechanized corps of the Red Army ended without even starting. Thousands of tanks, among them four hundred of the newest, best in the world KV and T-34, could not penetrate the defense of the advanced units of the two (8th and 256th) infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht and ingloriously disappeared in the thicket of the dense forests of Western Belarus.

"ON THE ROADS OF THE Familiar..."

The weakest link in Boldin's KMG was, of course, the 6th Cavalry Corps (6th and 36th Cavalry Divisions). Nevertheless, it was he who gave the Germans so much anxiety that it was reflected even in the diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces. The word "elite" was not in use in those days, but it

is the one that is the best suited to describe the 6th Cavalry Corps. The oldest (created back in the years of the Civil War) unit of the Red Army became a true "forge of personnel" for its senior command staff. In the fall of 1919, S.K. became the commander of the 6th Cavalry Division. Timoshenko is a future marshal, People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, twice Hero of the Soviet Union. In the next year, 1920, K.A. became assistant chief of staff of the 6th cd. Meretskoy is a future Marshal, Hero of the Soviet Union, Chief of the General Staff and Deputy People's Commissar of Defense. In the mid-30s, the 6th Cavalry Corps was commanded by G.K. Zhukov is the future Marshal, Chief of the General Staff (after Meretskoy), First Deputy Supreme Commander (i.e. Comrade Stalin himself) during the war years, the only four times Hero of the Soviet Union in history. In the autumn of 1939, the 6th cavor-nus leads another future marshal, A.I. Eremenko. The future Marshal K.S. also served as the chief of staff of an artillery regiment in the same 6th cavalry division. Moskalenko.

In September 1939, the 6th Cavalry Division was part of a mechanized cavalry group, which, under the command of Commander Boldin, "liberated" Bialystok on September 22 (i.e., took the Polish city they had captured from the hands of the Germans). The second division of the corps (36th cavalry) also participated in the Soviet-Polish war of 1939, and in the same places: on September 19, the 36th cavalry division, along with other units of the 3rd and 11th armies, stormed the city of Vilna (Vilnius). It remains only to add that by the beginning of the war with Germany, this completely outstanding cavalry unit was located in the ancient Polish city of Lomza - 20 km from the border. For what need the cavalry corps ended up next to the border pillars - this can still be argued, but there is no doubt that

the fact that the area of real combat operations of the 6th KK (Lomzha, Bialystok, Grodno) was known to the fighters and corps commanders for a long time. So it all started, as in the famous song of the 30s: *"But on the roads we know for our beloved people's*

commissar, we will lead war horses ..." By the way, about horses. About the use of cavalry, and even among the Belarusian swamps, our party "historians" always argued with a sad shake of the head, citing this as an example of the blatant backwardness of the Red Army and its complete unpreparedness for waging a modern war. Why, that's the "trouble": the most powerful, 2nd tank group of the Wehrmacht, led by the famous Guderian (the actual creator of the German tank forces), also had a cavalry division! Moreover, for some reason Guderian placed it on his right (southern) flank, in the very quagmire of the Polesye swamps.

No matter how hard the Soviet historians and memoirists "fought" with this division! Boldin, in his memoirs, went so far as to "change saddles for parachutes," and informed gullible readers about the presence in the German Army Group Center of not a cavalry, but ... an "airborne" division!

But this riddle is solved very simply. Neither

Guderian nor Pavlov were going to attack with horse lava in the swamp. The horse in the cavalry divisions of the Second World War served as **a vehicle that** increased the mobility of the formation (in comparison with conventional infantry) many times over. In the summer of 1941, neither we nor the Germans had a sufficient number of off-road vehicles capable of moving rifle units along winding forest roads, and therefore **the presence of large cavalry forces was one of the significant advantages of the Red Army**. Moving at a pace of 50-60 km per day (which is quite affordable for the cavalry), the cavalry divisions could keep up with the tank units even in the conditions of the most successful, swift offensive. And directly into battle, both German and Soviet cavalrymen went, as a rule, on foot. In practice, this simple and obvious theory looked like this: *"...Motorized*

formations had to move that day along a hilly sandy area covered with dense virgin forest. Movement along it (especially French-made cars) was almost impossible ... All cars

time they got stuck and stopped the entire column following them, since the possibility of a detour on forest roads was completely excluded ... The infantrymen and artillerymen were forced to pull out the stuck vehicles all the time ... It was a real torment for the command to see how his "mobile" troops were suffocating. .." So the commander of the

3rd tank group of the Wehrmacht, G. Goth, describes the events of June 23, 1941 in his memoirs. During the whole day, almost without engaging in battle, his motorized divisions traveled no more than 50-60 km. And here is

an excerpt from the memoirs of V.A. Grechanichenko (Chief of Staff of the 94th Cavalry Regiment of

the 6th Cavalry Division): *"... At 23:30 on June 22, units of the division headed for Bialystok in two columns. We covered a distance of 75 kilometers without halts. The marching columns put themselves in order on the move. There was no rest. By 1700 on June 23, the division had concentrated in a forest area 2 km north of Bialystok... It was late afternoon when we received the order to move further in the direction of Sokulka. The forced march for 35 kilometers was made quickly ... "* [83]. As you can see, in

the wilderness of Western Belarus, the Soviet cavalry was at least as mobile as the German motorized infantry. Of course, no horse can compete with the motor in endurance, in the ability for continuous, many hours and many days of movement. Therefore, after friend Roosevelt gave Comrade Stalin 435 thousand cars (including more than a hundred thousand Studebaker trucks with their fantastic reliability and maneuverability), the era of cavalry in the Red Army ended. Although not suddenly and not immediately. The cavalry fought the entire war, and even nine (!) Cavalry divisions took part in the liberation of Prague in May 1945 ... It must also be taken into account that by the summer of 1941, sabers

and pikes had long ceased to be the main armament of cavalry units . The structure of the cavalry division of the Red Army included four cavalry regiments, a tank regiment, artillery and anti-aircraft divisions. In the armies of other countries, such a formation was usually called an "armored cavalry brigade." Headcount

Cavalry division included 8968 people, 7625 horses, 64 tanks and 18 armored vehicles, 62 vehicles for various purposes (including 10 tank trucks), 24 76 mm guns, 8 122 mm howitzers, 16 anti-tank 45 mm guns. Taking into account the high vulnerability of the cavalry from air strikes in principle, numerous anti-aircraft weapons were included in the cavalry division: 8 anti-aircraft guns of 76 mm caliber, 12 anti-aircraft guns of 37 mm caliber, 18 anti-aircraft machine guns. The cavalry corps included two cavalry divisions and a number of separate units, including a separate communications division and a link of aircraft (!!!) communications (in this capacity, light U-2 aircraft were used, capable of taking off and landing on any forest clearing).

In general, the cavalry corps roughly corresponded to one motorized division, significantly surpassing it in the number of personnel and the number of artillery pieces. The only "disadvantage" (more correctly, a feature) of the cavalry formations was the absence of large (152-mm) caliber howitzers in their arsenal. However, the cavalry corps was not created to break through the fortified defensive positions of the enemy, the destruction of which would require heavy artillery. In the oncoming battle with the German infantry division (and this is exactly what the 6th Cavalry Corps was supposed to do), the absence of heavy howitzers was more than compensated for by the presence of a tank "ram" (already in November 1940, the 6th Cavalry Division was armed with 48 BT tanks and **9 armored vehicles, the 36th Cavalry Division is armed with 52 BT tanks and 17 armored vehicles**).

Having covered more than 120 km in two days along the forest roads of the Bialystok ledge, the 6th Cavalry Division reached the Biebrzha River in the area of the town of Sidra (see Map No. 2). By this time, units of the second echelon of the 256th Wehrmacht Infantry Division could be located there (the advanced units of this division were already in the Kuznitsa area, where they fought with tanks of the 6th mechanized corps). Noteworthy is the serial number of the German division itself. Germany entered World War II with 86 infantry divisions in the Wehrmacht, of which only 3% of the so-called "first wave divisions" were regular divisions of the peacetime army. The 256th Infantry is a division of the "fourth wave" of the formation, staffed by reservists of the 2nd category and conscripts of the landwehr (i.e. territorial militia). In the Polish campaign, this division did not

participated at all. After the defeat of France, the 256th Infantry Division was transferred to the East, where it remained inactive until June 22, 1941. The former

"2nd class reservists" had no "two years of experience in modern warfare" at all. Nevertheless, the oncoming battle of the 256th infantry division of the Wehrmacht and the best cavalry division of the Red Army in the description of Grechanichenko looks like a beating - if not "babies", then completely untrained and helpless recruits: "... Our regiment, reinforced by one battery of an artillery battalion, it was ordered at 4 p.m. on June 24

to act as an advanced detachment of the division along the route Verkhole-siye, Zhuki, Sidra and successively capture the indicated lines to ensure the advance of the division in the direction of Grodno. Its main forces were supposed to follow our route ... At about 21 hours on June 24, the lead squadron came into contact with the enemy in the valley of the Biebrza River south of Sidra. The regimental commander brought artillery into battle to support the lead detachment. The enemy could not withstand the onslaught and retreated across the river. At the same time, his artillery opened fire. Night has come. The regiment dismounted and took battle order ...

Starting at dawn on June 25, German artillery opened massive fire on the entire depth of the regiment's battle formation. Enemy aviation was constantly loitering in the air at a low altitude ... Already in the first hours, all our heavy weapons were put out of action, the radio station was broken, communications were completely paralyzed. The regiment suffered heavy losses, was tightly pressed to the ground, deprived of the opportunity to conduct any active operations. Lieutenant Colonel N.G. was killed. Petrosyants. I took command of the regiment, and

more precisely, its remains.

There was no communication with the division headquarters, and somewhere at the end of the day, at my own peril and risk, I decided to withdraw the remnants of the units behind the Sokulka-Bialystok railway line. While leaving, I received a shrapnel wound. The withdrawal did little to improve our situation. The situation continued to worsen, there was still no communication with the highest headquarters... At midnight, about 300 people gathered - ours and the 48th cavalry regiments (that is, 9/10 of the personnel of the two regiments were already absent. - M.S.). A group of fighters and commanders of the 48th

the regiment was headed by senior lieutenant (estimate the military rank of the commander who took command of the regiment! - MS) Y. Govronsky, whom I knew personally. There were other commanders among those gathered. After consulting, we made a collective decision to retreat to the town of Krynki ... "

It is worth noting that there are other, more concise and rigid descriptions of these events:

"... The 6th Cavalry Division since the morning of June 25 in the initial area for the offensive was subjected to heavy bombardment from the air, which lasted until 12 noon. The cavalrymen were dispersed and began to retreat into the forests in disorder ... "

The retreat that began immediately turned into a disorderly stampede:
" ... Cars, tractors,

carts, crowded with people, were moving past in a continuous stream. We tried to stop the military, who were traveling and walking along with the refugees. But no one wanted to listen. Sometimes, in response to our demands, shots were fired (that is, there was still ammunition left - for firing at our own. - SM). Everyone already claimed that Slonim was occupied, that German landing forces landed ahead, barriers of tanks that had broken through, that there was no point in defending here.

On June 28, as soon as the sun rose, enemy aircraft began an indiscriminate treatment of the shores of Russia and the Volko-Vysk region. In essence, on this day, both military formations of the formation and unit of the 10th Army finally ceased to exist. Everything was mixed up and rolled like a shaft to the "East ... When our small group in the second half of June 30 reached the old border (i.e., the Soviet-Polish border of 1939 - M.S), the same chaos reigned here, as well as on the shores of Russia. All the corpses were crammed with cars, wagons, hospitals, refugees, disparate units and groups of our troops..." [83].

It is completely incomprehensible from Grechanichenko's story - did the "main forces of the division" appear on the battlefield, which "were supposed to follow our route"? Where was the main striking force of the division - its tank regiment?

Some answers to these questions can be found in the memoirs of Private VS Finogenov, a turret gunner of the BA-10 armored vehicle from

composition of the 35th tank regiment of the 6th cavalry division:

"... On the evening of June 22, an order was received to move towards Bialystok and, together with the 6th mechanized corps, take part in a counterattack in the direction of Grodno. On June 23, the regiment concentrated in the forest northeast of Bialystok. There were also other tank units. The forest was systematically bombed by enemy aircraft, causing great damage to our parts.

In the evening of the same day, the squadron was given the task of conducting reconnaissance in the Sokulka area, where the regiment was to advance and where, according to the information received, German tanks had already appeared. However, we did not find the enemy there. After our return from the reconnaissance raid, the regiment began to move in the direction of Sokulka. There was already a shortage of fuel (from Lomza to Sokulka no more than 100 km; the cruising range of the BA-10 armored car was 260-300 km, depending on the quality of the roads. - M.S.) and ammunition (if the enemy was not detected and the regiment had not yet entered into battle, then where did the ammunition disappear to?—MS) Logistic support was disorganized... We never managed to find any surviving ammunition depot. After two

days of fighting in the Sokulka area (with whom? - M.S.), the remnants of the regiment (why already "remnants"? - M.S.) began to retreat to Volkovysk. Due to the lack of fuel, part of the military vehicles had to be destroyed ... In the morning on a forest road, not reaching Volkovysk, they came under heavy bombardment. As a result, only three BT-5 tanks and two BA-10 armored vehicles, including ours, remained on the move in the regiment . th day of the

war) cannot but cause extreme surprise. An astronomical amount of ammunition was brought into the western military districts. Without being distracted for a second by a discussion about why, for the solution of what tasks, the military leadership of the "invariably peaceful country" accumulated colossal mountains of shells near the western borders, let's decide on the simplest - with arithmetic.

More than forty years ago, the "Military Historical Journal" (No. 8/1966) had the imprudence to inform readers that on the eve of the war, " 6,700 wagons of ammunition of various types were accumulated in the district warehouses of the Western Special Military District." Is it a lot? All

known by comparison. At the height of the war, from March 1943 to March 1944, the Western Front used up 16,661 carloads of ammunition. The 1st Ukrainian Front spent 10,945 wagons of ammunition over a comparable period of time [165, p. 333]. In other words, on average, for one month of hostilities, the front spent 1000-1400 wagons of ammunition. How could 6,700 wagons not be enough for one week?

According to the most conservative estimates, half of the reserves were left in the territory occupied by the enemy, i.e. exactly where the cavalry mechanized group of Boldin conducted (more precisely, was supposed to conduct) combat operations. According to far from complete and inaccurate data, during the first two weeks of the war in the zone of the Western Front, the following were "destroyed, left to the enemy and blown

up by the enemy" [68, pp. 86-87]: -

14.3 million rifle cartridges; - 510

thousand shells for a 45-mm gun; -

251 thousand shells for a 76-mm gun; -

155 thousand shells for a 122-mm

howitzer; - 130 thousand shells for a 152-mm howitzer. The

ammunition load of the BT-7 tank is 132 rounds of 45 mm caliber, the ammunition load of the T-34 tank is 77 rounds of 76 mm caliber. It is easy to make sure that even half of the amount of ammunition indicated above would be enough to provide all the tanks and armored vehicles of Boldin's KMG with two or three rounds of ammunition. On the other hand, even before the start of hostilities directly in the units, in combat vehicles and artillery charging boxes, there were already from one to one and a half ammunition loads (see Borzilov's report above). The operations of the first days of the war could be provided with a cash supply of ammunition, without any recourse to the district warehouses. The total ammunition load of tanks of the 6th mechanized corps was about **105 thousand shells** of 45 mm and 76 mm caliber. And that's just in tanks. And in the corps there were 135 cannon armored vehicles and 335 "barrels" of cannons, howitzers and mortars of various calibers [8, 78]. If all this deadly metal actually fell on the 256th infantry division of the Wehrmacht, then

The reader with a poetic mindset has this whole tragic-farcical story with the lack of ammunition in the units, which, without firing a single shot at the enemy, rushed around on the ground,

overflowing with ammunition depots, will evoke the famous poem by Francois Villon "I'm dying of thirst over the stream." But the military tribunal (or the parliamentary commission to investigate the causes and circumstances of the defeat of the Western Front, which commission has not been created to this day) should have had completely different thoughts and questions: "Where was the command of the cavalry-mechanized group at that time? What did it do to restore order in the troops entrusted to it?"

Having neither the practical opportunity nor the legal right to ask these questions to General Boldin, we confine ourselves to a careful reading of his memoirs.

«PICTURESQUE FOREST CORNER...»

Boldin is an outstanding memoirist. He has a wonderful, tenacious memory, preserving even the most insignificant details. Here, describing his first day in the war, he recalls both the suffocating heat, and the fact that the water in the flask was warm and did not refresh his parched throat. In the most detailed way, on dozens of pages, Boldin describes the history of his wanderings through the forests surrounded. But the main thing - about the preparation, conduct and results of the counterattack - is said very briefly, sparingly and

infinitely false. So, **the first day** of the war, the evening of June 22. *"... The commander of the 10th Army leans over the table, sighs, then says: - What*

to fight? Almost all of our aviation and anti-aircraft artillery have been destroyed. Ammunition is scarce. We are running out of fuel for tanks... Already in the first hours of the attack, enemy aircraft raided our fuel depots. They are still on fire. On the railway lines, fuel tanks were also destroyed ...

... the commander of the 6th cavalry corps, Major General I.S., arrived at the command post. Nikitin. He looks worried. - How are you ? I ask the

cavalryman. "Bad, Comrade General. The 6th division was defeated..." Without further ado, let's compare this statement with an excerpt from the memoirs of the chief of staff of the 94th cavalry regiment of that very "defeated" 6th cavalry division,

V.A. Grechanichenko: "... at about 10 o'clock on June 22, we came into contact with the enemy. A shootout ensued. An attempt by the Germans to break through to Lomzha on the move was repulsed. To the right, the 48th Cavalry Regiment held the defense. At 23:30 on June 22, by order of the corps commander, Major General I.S. Nikitin, parts of the division in two columns headed for Bialystok in a forced march ... " As you can see, it was still very far from the

defeat of the division ... "... The commander of the 6th mechanized corps, Major General M. G. Khatskilevich, arrived at the command post ... In combat conditions, the 6th Corps showed its best side. In the lane where

the Nazis, despite repeated attempts (???), did not manage to break through. The corps suffered losses (???), but it is still combat-ready and could, albeit not with full force, counterattack " (as we already know, on June 22, the 6th MK had no contact with the enemy at all. - M.S.) . **The second day** of the

war, June 23, 1941 *"... By dawn, the headquarters of the 6th mechanized and 6th cavalry corps settled in a new place, in a forest fifteen kilometers northeast of Bialystok. This picturesque forest corner has also become my command post ... "* That's right. And in the protocol of Pavlov's interrogation there is confirmation that all the headquarters, already far from the battlefield (the distance from Bialystok to the then border is 100 km), went even further: *"On the second day, units of the 10th Army, except for the headquarters armies remained where they were. The army headquarters changed its command post, moving east of Bialystok to the Valpy area ... "* [67]. What were our generals doing, gathered in the "picturesque forest corner"?

"Time is running out, but I still can't fulfill Pavlov's order to create a shock cavalry-mechanized group. The most unpleasant thing (so in the text. - M.S.) is that I do not know where the 11th mechanized corps of General D.K. Mostovenko. We have no connection either with him or with the 3rd army, which he is part of ... "

Amazing confessions. How could the deputy commander of the district not know the location of the mechanized corps? The mechanized corps is not a needle in a haystack. There were only six of them in the entire district, and if you do not take into account the 17th and 20th, the formation of which was just beginning, then there were exactly four combat-ready mechanized corps. We will have to recall that the headquarters of the 11th mechanized corps and the 204th motorized division were stationed in Volkovysk (85 km east of Bialystok), the 29th tank division in Grodno (75 km northeast of Bialystok), and the 33rd tank division in the area the town of Indura (18 km south of Grodno). In other words, from the "picturesque forest corner" in which General Boldin hid with his headquarters, there were about 60-70 kilometers to the divisions of the 11th mechanized corps. But they did not manage to overcome this distance.

Until the final defeat that took place on June 26-27, Boldin not only **was never at the location of the troops entrusted to him, but he was not even able to establish any connection with the 11th mechanized corps.** Just in case, we recall that in total KMG Boldin had two communications squadrons, an equestrian communications division, three corps air squadrons and eight (!) Separate communications battalions. For the most meticulous, you can also indicate their numbers: 4, 7, 124, 185 as part of the 6th mechanized corps and 29, 33, 583 and 456 as part of the 11th mechanized corps. There were also radios: five powerful, with a telephone communication range of 300 km, RSB radio stations in the 6th mechanized corps, two in the 11th mechanized corps. Were there radio communications at Boldin's headquarters? Unfortunately, the author does not know anything about this, but if Boldin took refuge in a "picturesque forest corner", not bothering to provide his command post with radio communications,

then such actions cannot be called anything other than desertion.
"... To top it off, at dawn, enemy bombers caught the 36th Cavalry Division on the march and disheveled it. So now there can be no question of a counterattack ... I was sitting in a tent, overwhelmed by gloomy thoughts ... "

Of course, Boldin never said a word anywhere about what specific forces and means were included in the cavalry mechanized group, in what grouping and with what forces the enemy attacked, so the phrase that the "disarray" of one cavalry division made a counterattack by the Soviet troops "completely impossible" did not seem to readers in 1962 as absurd as it really is. And the attentive reader must have already noticed a very strange

chronology of events: according to Boldin, on June 22 the 6th Cavalry Division was "destroyed", at dawn on June 23 the 36th was "disheveled", there were simply no other cavalry units in the KMG, and suddenly after Then, on June 25, the chief of staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces notes in his diary that in the Grodno region *"large masses of Russian cavalry attack the western flank of the 8th Corps"*? In general, the chronology in Boldin's memoirs is lame on both legs: *"... Khatskilevich called, who was in the units. "Comrade General," came his excited voice, "fuel and ammunition are running out. Tankers fight bravely. But without*

shells and fuel, our vehicles become helpless (on June 23, the 6th MK made a march from the Velsk region to Kuznitsa and has not yet fired a single shot at the enemy. - M.S.). "Hear me, comrade Khatskilevich," I strained my voice, trying to shout over the terrible rumble of enemy planes flying over us. — Hold on! I will immediately take all measures to help. We have no connection with the headquarters of the front. Therefore, immediately after a conversation with Khatskilevich, I sent a letter to Minsk by plane, in which I asked to urgently organize the transfer of fuel and ammunition by air ... "

The ellipsis should not confuse the reader. We haven't missed anything. It was precisely this - sending a letter to Minsk - that "all the measures" taken by the first deputy front commander were limited to. **Third day** of the

war. "... The war has been going on for the third day. In fact, we are behind enemy lines. Communication with many units of the 10th Army is lost, there is little ammunition (???) and there is a complete absence (???) of fuel ... there is still no information from Minsk ... The enemy is still pressing. We are fighting in the environment (???). And we have less and less power. Tankers took up defense in a ten-kilometer strip. Our command post is

three kilometers behind them ... " From Borzilov's report it is known that *"in the morning of June 24, the 7th TD concentrated on the attack line south of Sokulka and Old Dubno."* Boldin's command post was not 3, but at least 33 km from the line of deployment of the 6th mechanized corps, and it was still very far from

encirclement ... And, finally, the

fifth day of the war . "On the fifth day of the war, having no ammunition, the troops were forced to retreat and dispersed in scattered groups thro

"They dispersed in scattered groups through the forests." Let's pay tribute to Boldin at least in this - not every Soviet general in his memoirs was capable of such frankness.

That, in fact, is all that can be learned about the circumstances of the defeat from the memoirs of Boldin. Before us is a standard set of "circumstances" prescribed for Soviet historical science.

force majeure": there was no communication, there was no fuel, the ammunition

ran out. Why is there no connection - enemy saboteurs are all wires cut. Where

did the fuel go - German aircraft bombed all the warehouses.

Why the shells weren't delivered - the letter didn't reach Minsk ...

Unnecessary details that interfere with the assimilation of the only true truth - how many wires were there, how many saboteurs were there, what power reserve the Soviet tanks had at one gas station, how many shells are included in one transported ammunition, with what forces the German aviation could bomb "all the warehouses" and how many of these same warehouses were in the Western Special Military District alone - discarded as unnecessary. The simple and indisputable truth that the Armed Forces are being created in order to operate in the face of enemy opposition has also been discarded as unnecessary. What kind of army is this, if it is capable of fighting only when no one interferes with it?

Perhaps the most interesting and valuable thing about Boldin's memoirs is what they don't contain. And in order to see what is not, let's open the memoirs of another general, who on the same days of June 41st led the actions of a large mechanized formation. So,

G. Guderian, "Memoirs of a Soldier": "... On

June 22, at 6:50 am, I crossed the Bug in an assault boat ...

following the tracks of the tanks of the 18th Panzer Division, I reached the bridge over the Desna River. .. at my approach, the Russians began to scatter in different directions ... throughout the first half of the day on June 22, I accompanied the 18th TD ...

... On June 23, at 4:10 am, I left my command post and headed for the 12th Army Corps, from this corps I went to the 47th Tank Corps, to the village of Bildeiki, 23 km east of Brest Litovsk. Then I went to the 17th Panzer Division, where I arrived at 8 o'clock ... Then I went to Pruzhany (70 km northeast of the border. - M.S.), where the command post of the tank group was transferred. ... On June 24, at 8:25 am, I left my

command post and drove towards Slonim (this is another 80 km deep into the Soviet

territory. - M.S.) ... *on the way, I came across Russian infantry holding the highway under fire ... I was forced to intervene and with machine gun fire from the commander's tank forced the enemy to leave their positions ... at 11:30 I arrived at the command post of the*

17th Panzer Division, located on the western outskirts of Slonim, where, in addition to the division commander, I met the commander of the 47th Corps ... " [65].

"Where, besides the division commander, did I meet the commander of a tank corps ..." And this meeting of three generals takes place at a field command post, a hundred meters from the line of fire. That is the whole clue as to **why the Red Army found itself on its own territory "without communication", and the German army on our territory - with communication.** Party historians

have been explaining to us for decades that communication in war is provided by wires (which were cut to one and all by German saboteurs) and radio stations (which allegedly did not exist in 1941).

And Guderian simply and clearly shows that **the problem of communication and troop control is decided not by wires, but by people!**

The commander of the advanced 17th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht did not have to call anywhere. His immediate superior, the commander of the 47th Tank Corps, together with him at the same command post, personally directs the battle, and the chief commander among them, the commander of a tank group, breaks into each of his divisions several times a day under enemy fire on a tank. Of course, this method of leadership, as demonstrated by the German generals, is dangerous. Which was immediately confirmed at the command post near Slonim, where the commander of the 17th TD, Lieutenant General von Arnim, was wounded (and could have been killed). On the other hand, the method of the Soviet generals (the headquarters of the Western Front was already on June 27 near Mogilev, 500 km from the border) turned out to be even more dangerous - it was he who led to a catastrophic defeat. And if Guderian suggested that his subordinates, following the example of General Boldin, sit down for a week in a "picturesque forest corner" and send "letters by plane to Berlin" from there, then at best they would take it as a joke - stupid and inappropriate in the war.

However, Boldin was not alone in the forest. On the morning of June 23, 1941, another general appeared at Boldin's headquarters.

In his memoirs, Boldin explains this visit as follows: "... I was sought

out by the assistant commander of the district troops for the construction of fortified areas, Major General I.P. Mikhailin. The war found him at one of the construction sites. Retreating with the troops, Major General Mikhailin accidentally found out where I was and came to my command

post ... "General Mikhailin did not retreat" along with the troops. He clearly overtook them. Boldin's command post, as the attentive reader will remember, was located 15 km northeast of Bialystok, i.e. 100 km from the line of pillboxes of the Grodno, Osovets, Zambrovsky and Brest fortified areas. A soldier does not stomp 100 km with his feet in a day ... But the main thing, of course, is not the kilometers - for what such need did the senior commander go to the rear of the front? Did he have other things to do? The fortified area is not concrete boxes of pillboxes. A fortified area is a military unit that has tremendous firepower and solves the most important operational tasks at the defense stage. In the first days of the war, very, very much depended on General Mikhailin and his subordinates.

And Boldin understands this very well - that is why he renames Mikhailin into a "military builder", whom the war only *"caught on one of the construction sites."* Nothing of the kind - General Mikhailin had nothing to do with the technical or engineering troops (according to the terminology then adopted in the Red Army), and his position was called "assistant commander of the district troops for fortified areas." Without any "construction". And before being appointed to this position (and before being awarded the rank of general on June 4, 1940), Comrade Mikhailin was an army political worker. He brought up fighters and commanders "in the spirit of boundless devotion to his native Communist Party and its great leader, Comrade Stalin..." 1st Cavalry

Corps, Major General Nikitin. How was the commander of the mobile unit, which received the order to advance on Grodno and further north, going to lead his cavalymen, sitting in the forest near Bialystok, tens of kilometers from the battlefield? And where were the commanders of the two cavalry divisions of the 6th Cavalry Corps at the same time? Why Grechanichenko

twice writes that *"our persistent search for the headquarters of the division remained fruitless"*! Why was the duties of the commander of the 48th cavalry regiment carried out by a senior lieutenant already on June 25? Yes, the regimental commander could be wounded or killed, but where were his deputies, the chief of staff, colonels, majors and numerous captains?

An interesting mention of one of the generals of the elite 6th Cavalry Corps is found in the memoirs of Senior Sergeant Z.P. Ryabchenko. He met the war in Lomza, a radio operator of the 38th separate communications squadron. Moreover, Sergeant Ryabchenko worked at the RSB radio station, *"which was installed on a 3-axle vehicle and belonged to the division headquarters."* So with the technical means of communication at the command of this division, everything was in perfect order. There was a big mess with the subjects, between which Sergeant Ryabchenko was supposed to establish radio contact:

*"...Then we heard a TASS broadcast. The general asked in a low voice to turn it on louder, exactly at 12.02 comrade Molotov spoke and announced that the Soviet Union should be considered at war with Germany, that's when we learned about the start of the war. The general and the major said goodbye to us, in parting they said that "it will be very difficult for you, sons, this war will be unprecedented in wars." **They left immediately, and I didn't see anyone else** (emphasis added by me. - M.S.). Only one lieutenant remained with us, he was brave, good, young, only from the school, I don't remember his last name ... "* [184].

There are still many chapters, many documents, many regiments and divisions ahead in our book, commanded by lieutenants. Thanks to them, "brave, young, I don't remember his last name," the war that began at Bialystok ended in the end not in Vladivostok, but in Berlin. And the generals

of the Red Army had wires and walkie-talkies. And in huge quantities. Thus, in the Western OVO alone (according to the memorandum of the chief of staff of the district, Major General Klimovsky dated June 19, 1941), the district communications service had 117 thousand insulators, 78 thousand hooks and 261 tons of wires [66, p. 44]. In total, as of January 1, 1941, the Red Army had 343,241 km of telephone and 28,147 km of telegraph cable. This amount could wrap the Earth around the equator 9 times. There were 252,376 telephone sets of all types. Average

- more than 800 vehicles per division. There were, of course, much fewer telegraph sets - "only" 11,049 pieces, including 247 "BODO" devices for encrypted communication [6, p. 623] .

And there were German saboteurs in the rear of the Red Army. Each of the four tank groups of the Wehrmacht was given **one company of saboteurs** from the Brandenburg Special Purpose Regiment. The company consisted of 2 officers, 220 non-commissioned officers and privates, including 20-30 people with knowledge of the Russian language [189, p. 55]. This "innumerable horde" of enemies had only a few hours at its disposal (for reasons of secrecy, the Germans began to cut the wires just before dawn on June 22, 1941). Soviet partisans in Belarus before the start of Operation Bagration (June 1944) were, as is commonly believed, more than 140 thousand. The time for cutting wires was practically unlimited - the war was already in its third year, so there was no need to hide hostile actions and intentions. Was it then possible, in June 1944, to cut "all the wires" on the same terrain and leave the German army without communication? However,

to leave the Red Army "without communication" with the help of scissors alone was impossible in principle - given the huge amount of radio communications. As an illustration, we will cite data from the MP-41 mobilization plan, signed by Timoshenko and Zhukov on February 12, 1941. As of January 1, 1941, the Armed Forces of the USSR included:

- front-line radio stations (PAT) 40 pieces (an average **of 8 for each of the five future fronts**); -
corps (RAF, RSB) 1613 pieces (an average **of 18 for each rifle and mechanized corps**); - regimental
(5AK) 5909 units (an average **of 4 for each regiment**) [6, pp. 622-623]. **Total -**

7566 radio stations of all types (not counting tank and aircraft radio stations). And this is on January 1, 1941. The factories continued their "peaceful creative work", and by June 22 there should have been even more radio communications. So, the plan of the 41st year provided for the release of 33 PAT, 940 RSB and RAF, 1000 5AK. For some reason, the note on the MP-41 mobilization plan does not contain data on the presence of the predecessor of the RAF - a powerful (500 W) radio station.

-AK, although there were a lot of these complexes in the troops. So, for example, in the Kiev OVO (58 divisions), as of May 10, 1941, there were 5 PAT complexes, 6 RAF, 97 RSB, 126 11-AK stations and 1012 regimental 5AK [6, p. 191]. Even without counting the regimental 5AK, it turns out an average of 4 powerful radio stations per district division.

The PAT complex could be considered a true miracle of technology of the 40s. Huge power (1.2 kW) made it possible to provide telephone communication at a distance of 600 km, and telegraph - up to 2000 km. The transmitter circuit provided the ability to work on 381 fixed communication channels with automatic frequency control. It is worth noting that never - until the most victorious May 1945 - did the Red Army have such a number of PAT radio stations as it was in June 1941. And with such a saturation of the troops with radio communications, Boldin (and dozens of Stalin's commanders like him) could not even find the mechanized corps and armies entrusted to them? In addition to

radio installations, the Red Army was armed with tens of thousands of portable radio stations of the battalion and even company level (RB, RBC, RBS, RBM) with a power of 1-3 W and a range of 10-15 km. As of January 1, 1941, there were **35,617 such radio stations**. More than **100 tactical level radio stations per division**. Of course, this is very, very little. Compared with the established norms of staffing, which assumed a

completely phenomenal degree of radio equipment for the early 40s of the army. So, according to the staffing table of an ordinary rifle (not tank and not motorized) division of the Red Army, adopted in April 1941, in one howitzer artillery regiment there should have been 37 radio stations (for 36 howitzers), in an artillery regiment - 25 radio stations (for 24 guns), 3 radio stations in a rifle regiment and 5 radio stations in each of the three battalions of the regiment!

Probably, the communist historians themselves felt that laments about the lack of means of communication alone would not be enough to explain the causes of the unprecedented military disaster in the summer of 41-41. go.

Therefore, in advance, back in the 50s and 60s, they prepared a universal, magical "magic wand".

And since then, whenever our military "historians" had to explain another defeat, collapse, another loss of people and equipment, failure to follow orders and disruption of all plans, the indestructible and ubiquitous German aviation appeared on the scene.

FIRE FROM THE SKY

Aviation. Almighty German Air Force. It was she who destroyed thousands of Soviet tanks, she burned all the tankers, bombed 6700 wagons with ammunition, destroyed 60 district warehouses with fuel and shells, "disheveled" the 36th and defeated the 6th cavalry division, and at the same time also managed to "shoot literally every our car" (as the commander of the 4th Army, General Korobkov, said in his last speech at the trial), and with her "terrible rumble" prevented Boldin from giving wise orders and so on, so on, so on ... Of all the myths about the beginning of the war, this one is at the

same **time and the most absurd, and the most rooted**. Any "Marya Ivanovna" from the Department of Contemporary History, who cannot distinguish between a cartridge and a pontoon and a tank from a track, tells her students that "German aviation seized air supremacy from the first days of the war," with the same unreasoning confidence with which she explains to his grandchildren that you need to obey mom and dad. It is difficult to argue with the general delusion, but let's try.

To begin with, let's listen to people who know war and military aviation firsthand.

"... On June 25, Soviet troops as part of the 11th and 6th mechanized corps launched a counterattack on the enemy in the Grodno region. They called from Mogilev so that our division as a whole took part in this operation. In the evening, I learned from a representative of the front headquarters who arrived at our place: in addition to us, the counterattack is supported by the regiments of the 12th bomber and 43rd fighter divisions, as well as the 3rd long-range bomber aviation corps, commanded by Colonel I. S. Skripko (now air marshal). On this sector of the front, the aviators then made 780 sorties, destroyed about 30 tanks, 16 guns and up to 60 vehicles with manpower. Success inspired us..." [49].

What is the most remarkable thing about this testimony? Not even by the fact that, it turns out, not only German aircraft hung in

air over the area of the failed counterattack of KMG Boldin, but with his last phrase. The

destruction of **30 tanks and 60 vehicles as a result of 780 sorties** is estimated by the author of the memoirs as a major, inspiring success! At the same time, let's not forget that these figures were taken "from the air", i.e. from the reports of the pilots themselves, and not at all from the journals of the combat losses of the German divisions. The degree of reliability of these reports is well known to aviation historians. The real losses of the enemy

were, of course, many times less. And this is regarded as a great success? Who is the author? Maybe he understands the issues of combat use

of aviation worse than Marvanna? Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the 13th bomber air division (13th BAD), Major General F.P. Polynin became known to the entire aviation world even before the start of World War II. True, in accordance with the norms of top secrecy then adopted in the Soviet Union, Polynin was known in absentia and without a surname, simply as the commander of the "same" bomber formation that bombed the Japanese air base on the island of Taiwan

An unprecedented raid 800 km long over the territory of China occupied by the Japanese was organized and carried out by Polynin in such a way that the Japanese air defense not only failed to provide any resistance, but did not even detect the very fact of the passage of 28 Soviet bombers. After the

war in China, in which Polynin participated intermittently since 1933, he became the commander of the Air Force of the 13th Army during the Finnish war. During that war, Soviet military aviation (the number of which in the theater by February 1940 exceeded 3880 aircraft, including 510 aircraft of the Baltic Fleet Air Force) completed 101,000 sorties. This figure is comparable to the indicators of the use of aviation in the largest battles of the Great Patriotic War (the Battle of Kursk - 118 thousand sorties from July 5 to August 23, 1943 and the Battle of Stalingrad - 114 thousand sorties from July 1942 to February 1943). The war that began on June 22, 1941 was the third in a row for Poland, and hardly any of the commanders of the German bomber air groups had more combat experience than him by that day.

Now let's open the memoirs of Air Marshal (in those days - the commander of the aforementioned 3rd long-range bomber air corps) N.S. Skripko [50]. Already at 10 am on June 22, his corps received an order to concentrate all forces to defeat the enemy's motorized columns in the Suwalki-Alytus area. The first bombing attack on units of the 3rd Panzer Group was carried out by our pilots on June 22 at 15:40 in the Merkin area. In total, on that day, one and a half **hundred** combat

departures.

June 24, as N.S. writes in his memoirs Skripko, *"the combat mission of the 3rd Air Corps remained the same - to destroy German tanks and motorized units of the Gota group, advancing directly on Minsk."* On that day, its pilots completed **170** sorties. On June 26, when German tanks reached the northern outskirts of Minsk, the pilots of the 3rd Air Corps flew **254** sorties, supporting the rifle divisions defending Minsk. It was on this day, June 26, 1941, attacking a column of troops of the 3rd tank group on the Molodechno-Minsk highway near the town of Radoshkovichi, that Captain Nikolai Frantsevich Gastello, commander of the 4th squadron of the 207th air regiment, combat veteran, accomplished his immortal feat in Finland and Khalkhin Gol. As you can see, Soviet aviation was by no means idle. Every day, **hundreds of sorties** hit the motorized columns of the 3rd tank group of G. Hoth, but it (the Wehrmacht tank group) did not

disappear anywhere, but continued to move forward almost non-stop. Moreover, in Goth's memoirs there are almost no "traces" of these bombings, except for one single phrase in an entry dated June 24: "For the next 5 days, enemy air activity intensified." That's all. Goth complains about bad roads, dust, forest fires, torrential July rains much more often and more extensively. In the last days of June 1941, a critical situation arose in the zone of the North-Western Front. German tank divisions, having made a throw 300-350 km from the border to the Daugava River (Western Dvina), crossed this most important water barrier in the Daugavpils and Jekabpils regions. After that, the outcome of the defensive operation in

The Baltic States depended to a large extent on whether Soviet aviation would be able to destroy bridges and pontoon crossings on the Daugava in the shortest possible time. On June 30, 1941, all three bomber regiments of the Baltic Fleet Air Force (1st MTAP, 57th BAP, 73rd BAP) took part in a massive air raid. A total of 99 sorties were made that day. 34 bombers were shot down by German fighters, 5 made emergency landings. 77 aircrew members were killed or missing. Not a single bridge, not a single crossing was destroyed. Reliably educated by Soviet writers,

the reader "already understood everything." Our planes were "hopelessly outdated coffins", the pilots - "with a flight time of six hours" (only Polynin, probably, could fly) - that's why the strikes of Soviet aviation did not produce the desired effect. For the sake of truth, it should be noted

that military people with the highest ranks initially gave similar assessments of the actions of Soviet aviation in the first days of the war. Thus, the Headquarters in

Directive No. 00285 of July 11, 1941 noted that *"our aviation operated mainly against the mechanized and tank troops of the Germans. Hundreds of*

aircraft entered the battle with tanks, but the desired effect was not achieved, because the fight of aviation against tanks was poorly organized" [5, p. 63]. This Directive was signed by Chief of the General Staff Zhukov. In this particular case,

Army General Zhukov made a mistake. The reason for the lack of a "proper effect" was not only and not so much "poor organization". In what also it was necessary to be convinced in one and a half month. On August 28,

1941, Supreme Commander-in-Chief I. Stalin personally ordered (order No. 0077) *"in order to disrupt the operation of the enemy's tank grouping in the Bryansk direction, during August 28-31, an operation should be carried out by the Air Force of the fronts and aviation of the Civil Code reserve ... In total, the operation should to participate 450 combat aircraft..."* [5, p. 146]. The operation of the "enemy tank grouping" is the very turn of Guderian's 2nd tank group from Moscow to Kiev direction, about the expediency of which

all the surviving German generals argued in their post-war memoirs.
Comrade

Stalin's instructions were overfulfilled. **464 aircraft** (230 bombers, 55 attack aircraft, 179 fighters) took part in the air operation (one of the largest in the entire initial period of the war) [27]. The Headquarters followed the course of the operation with relentless attention. The Deputy Commander of the Red Army Air Force, Major General I.F. Petrov. On September 4, 1941, Stalin sent the following telegram to the Bryansk Front: *"Bryansk. Eremenko for Petrov. Aviation is working well ... I wish you success. Hello to all pilots. I. Stalin"* [27]. The next day, September 5, Stalin's greetings were supplemented by the decision of the Headquarters to transfer two more attack aviation regiments and two fighter regiments to the Petrov group. The task remains the same: *"to defeat and destroy Guderian to the ground"* [5, p. 164]. In just 6 days of the operation, Soviet aviation then carried out about **4,000 sorties** [27]. Result? It was not possible to defeat and destroy to the ground; The 2nd Panzer Group defeated the troops of the

Bryansk Front, then the right wing of the Southwestern Front, and, after fighting 300 km, closed the encirclement ring of the Kiev "cauldron" on September 15-17. Moreover, Guderian himself, on the seventeen pages of his memoirs dedicated to the breakthrough of the 2nd Wehrmacht Panzer Group to the rear of the Southwestern Front, gave exactly three words to the actions of our aviation: "... On August 29, large enemy forces, supported by

aviation, undertook from the **south** and west offensive against the 24th Panzer Corps. The corps was forced to suspend the offensive of the 3rd Panzer and 10th Motorized Divisions..." [65]. "How so?" - the reader will exclaim in bewilderment,

imagining the war according to newspaper articles "on the occasion of the anniversary", in which the pilots of the "N-sky regiment" click German tanks again and again like seeds. "Four thousand sorties with no noticeable result? It can't be!" And everything is very simple. This was precisely

the real effectiveness of aviation weapons of that era. Already in

The next year, 1942, with the accumulation of experience in combat operations, this very "efficiency" was specified in numbers. In 1942, the Operations Directorate of the Main Headquarters of the Air Force of the KA established in tentative calculations of the "norms of combat capabilities" of the Il-2 attack aircraft that to destroy one light tank, it is necessary to send 4-5 Il-2 aircraft, and to destroy one medium tank of the Pz-IV type, Pz-III or StuG-III will require **12-15** sorties! [86, 166] In other words, the destruction of German tank groups in the summer of 1941 required not hundreds or even thousands, but **tens of thousands** of sorties. Moreover, the regulations referred to the specialized Il-2 attack aircraft, and not at all about the "horizontal" (as they were then called) SB or DB bombers.

Even a graduate of a culinary college should understand that in order to destroy a tank, you must first hit it, and if you hit it, pierce its armor, and so pierce it that the "armor effect" is sufficient to destroy the crew and mechanisms. How and how could a 1941 combat aircraft do this?

Let's start with task number one - aiming.

Everyone saw an anti-tank gun. If not on the battlefield, then at least in the picture in the

book. A long, long barrel (so that the projectile accelerates in it to a speed of three speeds of sound) rests on a massive steel frame. For greater stability, the entire structure is equipped with two long "paws" that rest against the ground before firing. The gunner of the artillery crew does nothing else but point the barrel at the target with the help of an optical sight and screws, which are called micrometer screws.

But on a pedestal at the entrance to my hometown of Samara is an Il-2 attack aircraft. The pilot's cabin accommodates one person. In addition to aiming, he has many other things to do in battle: feet on the turn pedals, his right hand on the altitude and roll control knob, his left hand controls the engine, it's not clear how the pilot sets the desired propeller pitch, changes the supercharger operation mode, controls the radiator flaps, monitors the situation in the air, gives orders to subordinates (if he is a flight commander) and dodges anti-aircraft fire. Two VYA-23 rapid-fire guns are not on a massive frame, but on a complex flexural-torsional

deformation of the wing, aiming is carried out "with the whole body", according to the aiming marks on the

windshield. Is it possible to get somewhere in such conditions? Can. But only very, very rarely. So, during field tests (i.e., in the absence of enemy opposition) at the Research Center for Aviation Arms of the Air Force, *"three pilots of the 245th cap, who had combat experience, were able to achieve only 9 hits in the tank with a total ammunition consumption of 300 shells per ShVAK cannons and 1290 cartridges for ShKAS machine guns."*

But getting into the tank is just the beginning. We need to break through his armor protection. There are even more problems with this. It was experimentally established that the best conditions for aiming were created with a gentle dive at an angle of 30 degrees to the horizon from a height of 500-700 meters. But under such conditions, shells, even if they hit the tank's armor, almost always ricocheted:

"... out of 62 hits on German medium tanks received during field firing from the air, there was only one through penetration (in 10 mm thick armor), one core jam, 27 hits in the undercarriage that did not cause significant damage, the rest were shell hits gave either dents or ricochets ..."

"The best (i.e., minimally effective) indicators were obtained only when shelling light German tanks: " *"... out of 53 hits received during 15 sorties, only 16 In some cases, penetration of the armor was obtained, in 10 cases dents in the armor and ricochets were received, the remaining hits fell on the undercarriage."*

inflicted ... "

But maybe it was only we who had such bad planes and weak guns, and everything was different with the Germans? An absolutely correct assumption. The German aircraft guns had completely different parameters. Against the background of the Soviet 23 mm Volkov-Yartsev gun, the main German MG-FF air gun in June 1941 looks like a rusty Zaporozhets against the background of a Mercedes-600.

The VYA-23 aircraft gun was originally developed as a means of combating protected ground targets. A very heavy (by aviation standards) 66-kilogram gun dispersed the projectile

weighing 200 g to a speed of 900 meters per second. The cannon of the Swiss company Oerlikon MG-FF, which was in service with German fighters and attack aircraft, was much smaller and three times lighter. But all good things come at a price. The low weight of the "Oerlikon" was due to the low muzzle energy. The Oerlikon armor-piercing projectile weighed only 115 g and had an initial speed of only 585 meters per second, that is, it had kinetic energy (namely, it is due to it that the armor is pierced) four times less **than** the VYa-23 projectile. As a result, the cannon armament of German fighters and attack aircraft turned out to be absolutely unsuitable for fighting against ground armored vehicles.

The latest "air tank destroyer" that the Luftwaffe had in 1941 was the Henschel Hs-129 twin-engine armored attack aircraft. In September 1941, the first six "pre-production" samples of this "wunderwaffe" arrived for military trials on the Eastern Front. During the tests, it was found that not only the MG-FF, but also the much more powerful 20-mm MG-151/20 air gun that replaced it, does not penetrate the armor of even the lightest Soviet tanks (T-60 and T-70) with attacks from any direction and at any dive angle [166]. To be honest, to obtain such information, it was even possible not to start expensive tests - it was enough to compare the plate with the parameters of the armor penetration of the MG-151 gun with the thickness of the armor of any of the many thousands of captured Soviet tanks. Significantly going beyond the chronological framework of this book, we note that the results of combat use in 1942-1943 were not much better. modernized Henschels armed with a 30 mm MK-101 air cannon. The probability of hitting a medium Soviet tank of the T-34 type turned out to be negligible, only 1-2%, i.e. to guarantee the incapacitation of one T-34, it was necessary to allocate at least 40-50 armored attack aircraft! Only Henschel attacks on Soviet armored vehicles could be more or less effective. For example, the probability of hitting an armored vehicle of the BA-10 type when firing

armor-piercing shells from MG-151 cannons (of course, under the most optimal conditions for range, visibility, etc.) reached 23-25%. That is

for guaranteed destruction of one BA-10 on the battlefield, it was necessary to allocate at least 8-9 armored attack aircraft [166]. True, five thousand armored vehicles of the Red Army had already been lost by that time (abandoned on the roadsides), so that in real battles the Henschels could not demonstrate their "super efficiency" ... Of course, the armament of World

War II combat aircraft was not limited to one only light small-caliber guns. There were also bombs of various calibers (the most massive were high-explosive fragmentation bombs weighing 100-250 kg). Of course, a direct hit by an air bomb was enough to disable a light or even a medium tank (a heavy KV, as noted in the report of the commander of the 4th TD Potaturchev, even withstood a direct hit). But how, by throwing an unguided bomb, can one achieve this very "direct hit", if it is almost impossible to hit such a point and moving target, which is a tank, even from a cannon? The accuracy of bombing from conventional "horizontal" (as they were called, in contrast to diving) bombers

depended very much on the flight altitude, visibility conditions, and crew qualifications. According to the data of the Combat Training Directorate of the Red Army Air Force, in the period 1943-1945, the probability of hitting

a target square of 200 x 200 meters from a height of 2 km increased for Pe-2 bomber crews from an average of 64 to 74% [190]. And this is in a calm environment of the training ground. In battle, under fire from enemy anti-aircraft guns, everything became much more complicated. The probability of destroying tanks using Henschel bombing weapons (maximum six 50 kg caliber bombs), even when bombing from a flat (at angles of 25-30 °) dive, did not exceed 0.4%, which made the use of these attack aircraft to fight tanks practically meaningless [166]. Significantly higher accuracy of bombing was provided by dive bombers. So, experienced Pe-2 crews in 1945, when

bombing from a dive (and using the latest PBP-4 sight), achieved 98% of the dropped bombs in a square of 200 x 200 meters with an average circular deviation from the target of 46 meters. By far the most successful aircraft in the class

The dive bombers were the German Junkers Ju-87, this famous symbol of the blitzkrieg, without which not a single film and television plot about the beginning of the war can do. Piloted by an experienced and physically hardy pilot (G-force at the exit from a dive reached 5-6 units), the Ju-87 could theoretically provide bombing accuracy of plus or minus 30 meters. This is a magnificent result for the early 40s of the XX century. But to destroy a medium tank, and even more so a heavy Soviet KV with its 90-mm armor, it was not enough to lay a bomb 30 meters from the target. What is needed is a direct hit, which even a diving Junkers could achieve only by rare chance.

Somewhat digressing from the events of the beginning of the war, we note that in 1943-1945 the Luftwaffe used (mainly to combat naval targets) high-precision guided munitions: the FX-1400 glide bomb and the Hs-293 cruise missile. Even these "miracles of technology" provided only 11-14% of hits on the target. Moreover, this extremely expensive and scarce weaponry was used, of course, not to fight boats and boats, but to strike at the largest surface ships (battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers), having a length of 400 to 250 meters, which is ten times larger than the geometric dimensions the heaviest tank.

It is not surprising that, in general, the losses of Soviet medium tanks were distributed throughout the war as follows: **from** enemy artillery fire (including tank guns) - **88%**, **from mines - 8% and from aviation - only 4%!** [84, p. 110] It took a radical revolution in weapons technology, associated with the advent of the helicopter and guided missiles, before aviation became the most dangerous adversary of tanks. But this is a completely different story of other wars of a different era ... And in June 1941,

the only way to increase the effectiveness of air attacks against tanks could **only be a massive massing of forces**. An example of such massing is the events described by Polynin on June 26, when five air divisions were thrown at once against the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht! And the result achieved that day - 30 destroyed German tanks - could rightfully be considered a major success. Having done with this forcedly lengthy technical

digression from the main topic, let's move on to the main question: what

Could aviation forces be "massively" used by the enemy against Soviet tanks from Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group? The famous German punctuality made life much easier for future historians. The composition, deployment, technical condition of the German Air Force are scheduled literally by the day [24, 37, 38].

So, on the left (northern) flank of Army Group Center, in the strip from Vilnius to Grodno, the offensive of the 3rd Panzer Group and the 9th Wehrmacht Army was supported from the air by the 8th Luftwaffe Air Corps under the command of General V. Richthofen. Let's say right away - it was one of the best, most experienced and famous formations of the Luftwaffe. The air groups that were part of the 8th Corps fought from the first hours of the Second World War, passing through the Polish and French campaigns, the "battle for Britain" and the battle for Crete. They were transferred to the eastern front from the battle zone over the Mediterranean just a few days before the start

of the invasion. This is true. More precisely, one part of the truth. Another, which Soviet "historians" have always forgotten, is that many months of continuous hostilities led to completely inevitable consequences in the number and technical condition of aircraft. In concrete terms, it looked like this. The bomber aviation of the 8th AK consisted of three air groups of "horizontal" bombers (I / KG2, II / KG2, III / KG3). With a regular strength of the Luftwaffe air group of 40 aircraft, by the morning of June 24, 1941, these three groups had 21, 23 and 18 aircraft, respectively, in good condition. Taking into account four command vehicles, the 8th Air Corps could lift **66 bombers into the air that day**. Moreover, these were obsolete and already discontinued Dornier aircraft - Do-17Z. The main strike force of the 8th Air Corps of the Luftwaffe was

four groups of diving Ju-87s (II / StG1, III / StG1, I / StG2, III / StG2). They were armed with **103 serviceable** Junkers. There were so many of them on the morning of June 22. Then the war began and the first losses appeared. So, on June 24, 9 Junkers from the StG1 were shot down by fighters of the Zakharov division (43rd and AD) over Minsk and Baranovichy (moreover, this figure, surprising for the first days of the war, is confirmed by German loss magazines).

In general, the slow-moving and weakly armored "lappet" often became easy prey for fighters (especially at the exit from a dive, when both the pilot and the air gunner were in a semi-conscious state). So, the commander of group III / StGI Hauptmann G. Malke was shot down three times behind the front line in the location of the Soviet troops. Twice he himself got out, and the third time, on July 8, 1941, he was taken out from behind the front line by a special search group. Already on June 23, 1941, over the Kaunas-Vilnius highway, the commander of the group I / StG2 Hichholm was shot down in an air battle [63]. The history simply did not save the names of dozens of ordinary pilots ...

In order for the reader to appreciate the notorious "multiple numerical superiority of German aviation", we note that the Soviet bomber divisions that took part in the operation described by Polynin, as of June 1, 1941, had 453 serviceable bombers [190] . And this is without the obsolete heavy TB-3. It is also worth noting that the maximum weight of the bomb load of the German Do-17Z was 1000 kg, our "obsolete" SB - 1600 kg, and the new DB-3f - 2500 kg.

The incredulous reader has already thought, probably, that the 8th Luftwaffe air corps, which fell into the action zone of KMG Boldin (and, consequently, on the pages of our story), was the smallest. Not at all. The formation of dive bombers that were part of it was **the largest on the entire Soviet-German front**. The 2nd Air Corps (southern flank of Army Group Center) had only three groups of dive bombers (94 serviceable Junkers). And it's all. In the offensive zone of the Army Groups "North" and "South" (the Baltic states, Ukraine, Moldova) in the first days of the war there was not a single diving Ju-87 at all. Not only that, the German aviation forces operating at the junction of the Western and Northwestern

fronts of the Red Army were negligible in order to grind two Soviet mechanized corps in three days. It is not a fact that they were generally involved on a large scale in the fight against Boldin's mechanized cavalry group. They had other tasks ahead of them. The main task of the dive bombers was fire support for the offensive of tank groups. This tactic has shown its high

efficiency in the invasion of France, it was on this interaction that all the operational plans of the summer of 1941 were built. Moreover, such tactics were the only possible one in a situation where two-thirds of the German tanks were armed with small-caliber guns (or did not have artillery weapons at all). Without fire support from aviation, they simply had nothing to break through the enemy's defensive lines. That is why those two aviation corps (2nd and 8th), which included Ju-87 dive bombers, acted exactly in the offensive zones of two "especially strong tank formations" (as they were called in the "Barbarossa" plan), t .e. Panzer groups Gotha and Guderian. But the command of the Luftwaffe could not fully concentrate

on solving this, its main task, since in the first days of the war with the USSR it had one more, the first and most important task: suppression of the many times superior forces of Soviet aviation. On June 22, 1941, the Germans deployed **22** fighter air groups (66 squadrons) against

the Soviet Union, which included a total of **1036** aircraft. They were opposed by the Soviet Air Force, which had **64** fighter regiments (320 squadrons) armed with about **4,200** aircraft only as part of the aviation of the western districts [190]. Another 763 fighters were part of the fleet aviation. And this is just the tip of the iceberg! Behind the back of the advanced grouping of Soviet aviation were huge reserves of aircraft, air units, and pilots. Suffice it to say that already on the fourth day of the war (June 25) the Air Force of the Western Front received two air divisions (that is, about 300-400 aircraft) transferred from the internal districts. By the seventeenth day of the war (July 9), the Air Force of the same Western Front received another 452 aircraft to make up for losses [53, p. 18]. You shouldn't be surprised by these numbers. The total number of fighters alone in the Red Army Air Force was (according to the most conservative source) 11,500 aircraft [35, p. 359].

If in such a situation the Germans had at least some chance of gaining air superiority, then it consisted in concentrating all the forces of aviation - including bomber and assault - on strikes against airfields

basing the Soviet Air Force, not being distracted by the pursuit of every Soviet car

No, the author is not at all going to accuse of direct deception those participants in the failed counterattack who write that German planes "chased literally after separate machines." Some of the sorties, which were able to perform in the first days of the war, one and a half hundred bombers of the 8th Luftwaffe Air Corps, were also directed against KMG Boldin. Some losses of equipment were caused precisely by these raids, some Luftwaffe pilots, insolent from impunity, were really chasing after some machines. And for people to whom the crackling Soviet propaganda promised that our aviation would be the fastest, highest and strongest of all, such a spectacle made an exceptionally depressing impression. The stunning **contrast between expectations and reality** became the main reason for those exceptionally harsh reviews of the actions of Soviet aviation, which we meet both in the thick memoirs of honored marshals and in the oral stories of ordinary soldiers. Well, as far as the reports and stories of the generals

and marshals are concerned, there is one more, quite understandable aspect. They needed an excuse. A good reason to explain the lightning-fast defeat of the divisions, armies and fronts entrusted to them. It is impossible to think of anything better than to attribute everything to the actions of the ubiquitous and all-destroying German aviation. That is, earlier in the course there was an even better excuse - "landing", but in recent years they write about German "airborne assault" much less frequently. Sometimes - even with a bashful note at the bottom of the page: "Information about the landing of airborne assault forces in the rear of the N division may be exaggerated." I would like to live until those bright times, when at least the same timid explanations will be accompanied by stories about how 10 thousand Soviet tanks were destroyed in a week by three hundred diving Junkers ...

STUPIDITY OR TREASON?

A military failure - and a terrible military catastrophe all the more - inevitably entails the search for spies and suspicions of treason. This version is not as crazy as it might seem at first glance. At least, the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, was very serious in those days. On August 19, 1941 (on the same day half a century before the GKChP putsch), he sent the following report to Stalin: *"I believe that the enemy knows very well our entire defense system, our entire operational-strategic grouping of our forces, and knows our immediate capabilities. Apparently, among our very important workers, who are in close contact with the general situation, the enemy has his own people ... "* [5, p. 361]. For the sake of truth, it should also be noted that in all his post-war "memoirs and reflections" Georgy Konstantinovich never mentions this memorandum of his.

As for the opinion of the author of this book, I do not believe in the hypothesis of a "conspiracy of dark forces". I do not believe - and that's it. In the conditions of the complete secrecy of the archives of the NKVD, nothing more intelligible than "I believe - I do not believe" cannot be said. And yet, "stepping on the torlo of his own song", the author considers it necessary to draw the reader's attention to the fact that even in a very short (actually - 10 days) history of military operations of the troops of the Western Special Military District there are facts that do not fit into the most wide scope of boundless slovenliness.

We will not argue about whether the command of the Western Front expected the imminent start of hostilities. There is no topic for discussion. On the night of June 20-21 (to be exact, at 2.40 on June 21), a message was sent from the headquarters of the Western Special Military District to Moscow that the enemy had removed the wire fences on the border, and the noise of motors was heard from the forests [186, p. 12]. The last pre-war intelligence report of the headquarters of the Western OVO ended with the statement that *"the main part of the German army in the zone against the Western Special Military District took its original position"* [186, p. 15].

In this situation, the command of the Western OVO (the future Western Front) - as well as the command of the neighboring Baltic OVO - is carrying out a number of measures to covertly bring troops into a state of full combat readiness for military operations, which should begin in the coming days. Many of these orders and actions have been discussed in previous chapters. However, at the same time, events are taking place that cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a deliberate reduction in the combat readiness of the troops. This incredible phenomenon of multidirectional actions that took place in the same district at the same time has not received a clear explanation to this day. Thus, most of **the anti-aircraft artillery** of the armies

of the first echelon of the Western OVO was withdrawn from the location of the units a few days before the start of the war and sent to district training camps [78]. In particular, the anti-aircraft division of the 86th rifle division (10th army) was at the beginning of the war at a training ground 130 km from the location of the division, and the anti-aircraft divisions of the 6th mechanized corps and the entire 4th army were at the district training ground near the village of Krupki, 120 kilometers east of Minsk. This is all the more strange because in the neighboring, Kiev, OVO, directly opposite orders were given. So, on June 20, Lieutenant General Muzychenko, commander of the 6th Army of the

KOVO, ordered: "... *The headquarters of corps, divisions, regiments are in place. Do not leave the area of*

deployment anywhere. ... The anti-aircraft divisions should be urgently withdrawn from the Lviv camp to their formations, upon arrival, set the task of covering the location of the divisions

from the air ... " [61]. Note that the experience of the German offensive in the West (in May 1940) was carefully studied by the Soviet military leadership. Information was scooped from two hands at once - both the German and the French military attaches were in Moscow. The fact that the "German standard" involves a massive air strike in the very first hours of the offensive, Pavlov knew perfectly well. At least, a lot was said about this at that December (1940) meeting of the highest command staff, at which Pavlov was one of the main speakers.

Further. At 4 p.m. on June 21, at a time when the roar of thousands of engines of German troops advancing towards the Bug was already audible to the naked ear, the commander of the 10th Air Division, deployed in

Brest-Kobrin district, receives a new code from the district headquarters: the order on June 20 to put the units on full combat readiness and prohibit vacations **is canceled** [44]. The former division commander, Colonel Belov, in his memoirs, claims that he did not even begin to bring such an order to his subordinates, but why was such an order given? And as can be judged from other recollections, in some parts this mysterious order was

done.

So, Lieutenant Colonel P. Tsupko writes in his memoirs that in the 13th bomber regiment (Bialystok-Volkovysk region), where *“from dawn to dark squadrons of camouflaged aircraft with suspended bombs and weapons, with crews stood ready”*, on June 22 was announced day off: *“... On Sunday, June 22, a day off was announced in the 13th air regiment. Everyone was delighted: they didn't rest for three months ... On Saturday evening, leaving behind the senior chief of the operator of the headquarters captain Vlasov, the command of the air regiment, many pilots and technicians left for their families in Russia ... ”*[64] .

Well, for a complete "set", on the eve of the war in this regiment, *“an anti-aircraft battery was removed from its position*

and left for exercises.” The famous Soviet general and historian S.P. Ivanov gives an interesting explanation for such actions of the Soviet command:

“... Stalin sought by the very state and behavior of the troops of the border districts to make it clear to Hitler that peace reigns in our country, if not carelessness (and why did he strive for this? - M.S.). Moreover, this was done, as they say, in the most natural form. For example, anti-aircraft units were at the training camp ... As a result, instead of misleading the aggressor about the combat readiness of our troops by skillful disinformation actions, we actually reduced it to an extremely low degree” [45] .

We find even more amazing evidence in the memoirs of S.F. Dolgushin. Lieutenant General of Aviation, Hero of the Soviet Union, Head of the Department of Tactics at the VVIA. Zhukovsky met the war as a junior lieutenant in the 122nd IAP (the Novy Dvor airfield near Grodno). Sergey Fedorovich

recalls:

“... On the eve of the war, he served at an airfield located 17 km from the border. Every day we had to be on duty ... Saturday, 21

*June 1941, the commander of the district, General of the Army Pavlov, flew to us, the commander of the Air Force of the district, General Konets ... Makarov and I were sent for aerial reconnaissance. Until that day, there were only 30 aircraft at the German airfield. We **checked this repeatedly (!!!)**, but on that day it turned out that more than 200 German aircraft were*

deployed there ... " Let's not be distracted by a discussion of sensational evidence that, it turns out, not only German, but also Soviet reconnaissance aircraft constantly invaded enemy airspace. Another thing is more important - what decision did the generals make when they received such a message about a sharp increase in the enemy grouping? "... At about 18

*o'clock, an order was received from the commander to remove **weapons and ammunition from aircraft** (aircraft of a fighter regiment based 17 km from the border. - M.S.) . An order is an order - we removed the weapons. But boxes of ammunition left. On June 22, at 2:30 an alarm was announced (the time exactly coincides with many other testimonies. - M.S), and instead of taking off and covering the airfield, we had to urgently put guns and machine guns on planes again. Our link was the first to install cannons, and then 15 enemy aircraft appeared ... " [141, 142]. What was it? Ridiculous coincidence?*

The diabolical

game of Stalin, who tried to lull

Hitler to sleep before putting an ax in his back, and in the end outplayed himself? CONSPIRACY?

Not everything is as clear as it seems in the history of the defense of the legendary Brest Fortress. In his secret (until 1988) monograph, Sandalov writes directly and without

equivocation: "... *The Brest Fortress turned out to be a trap and played a fatal role for the troops of the 28th at the beginning of the war. rifle corps and the entire 4th army ... a large number of personnel of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions remained in the fortress, not because they had the task of defending the fortress, but because they could not leave it ... » [79].*

Everything is absolutely logical. The fortress is built in such a way that it would be difficult to enter it. As a result, it is difficult to withdraw a large mass of people and equipment from any fortress at once. Sandalov writes that there was only one (northern) gate to exit the Brest Fortress to the east, then it was necessary to cross the Mukhavets River encircling the fortress. It is terrible to think what was going on there when two rifle divisions — almost 30 thousand people — tried to break out through this “eye of a needle” under a hail of enemy shells.

Just south of Brest, in a military town 3 km from the line of border posts, another division was stationed: the 22nd tank division from the 14th MK.

“This town,” writes Sandalov, “was on a flat area, well visible from the enemy’s side... the disposition of units was crowded... On alarm, the division went to the Zhabinka area and to the north (that is, back from the border! - M.S). In this case, the division had to cross the river. Mukhavets, cross the Warsaw highway and two railway lines ... This meant that during the passage of the division, all traffic along highways and railways was stopped in the Brest area ... ”Of course, the Germans appreciated and fully used the opportunities provided to them. In addition to the "own" artillery of the 45th infantry division of the Wehrmacht, artillery of two neighboring (34th and

31st) infantry divisions, twelve separate batteries, and a division of heavy mortars were put forward to shell Brest. For greater "convenience in work" the Germans lifted into the air tethered balloons with spotters. A flurry of fire literally swept thousands of people off the face of the earth, destroyed vehicles and artillery, which stood in close rows in the open. The 98th separate anti-tank division, reconnaissance battalion and some other units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions were almost completely destroyed. The 22nd Panzer Division lost up to half of its tanks and vehicles; from enemy shells, the artillery depot and fuel and lubricant depot of the division caught fire, and then exploded.

That's after three divisions were shot like a training target at the training ground, and the Germans already **at 7 o'clock in the morning occupied**

the blazing ruins of Brest, and the “heroic epic of the defense of the Brest Fortress”, sung in verse and prose, began.

Now is the time to ask the age-old Russian question - who is to blame?

The fortress, as an inanimate object, could not play any “role”. This phrase in Sandalov's monograph is just a figure of speech. The role of the “trap” was played by decisions made by people. Who took them, when and most importantly - why?

Traditional Soviet historiography habitually explained everything by the stupidity (naivety) of Stalin and his commanders: “A rash deployment was allowed ...” What did you have to think about in order to place three divisions where there was nobody and nothing - except for border patrols and minefields - and shouldn't be?

For the modern reader, the version of V. Suvorov has already become familiar: Stalin was preparing for an invasion and therefore moved his troops right to the border line. But we will not rush to conclusions. Everything has its own measure. To place barracks with four-tier bunks at a distance of a mortar shot from the border is preparation for the destruction of one's own soldiers, and in no way preparation for an attack on adjacent

territory. And did Stalin really decide to conquer all of Europe with the forces of the 22nd Panzer Division alone? The meaning of the question is that **all the other 60 tank and 31 motorized** divisions of the Red Army were NOT deployed near the border. I hope the reader will excuse us for not disclosing the entire list, but even the mechanized corps of the first echelon before the war were based in Siauliai, Kaunas, Grodno, Volkovysk, Bialystok, Kobrin, Rovtso, Brody, Lvov, Drohobych, Stanislav ... On distance from 50 to 100 km from the border. To fire at them from a cannon at dawn on June 22 was impossible

in principle. For the most attentive readers, I am ready to clarify that there was another division (41st TD from the 22nd MK), which on the eve of the war turned out to be very close, 12-15 kilometers from the border (in the city of Vladimir-Volynsky). But even 12 km is not 3 km. The difference - from the point of view of the possibility of getting out of the shelling - is huge (the firing range of the main calibers of field artillery was just 10-12 km). In the early morning of June 22, the commander of the

opened the "red package", and the division moved along the highway to Kovel in a forced march. In the report on the combat operations of the division we read: *"At 4 o'clock in the morning on 22.6.41 it was fired upon by long-range artillery fire of the enemy and during the period of mobilization had the loss of 10 fighters killed ..."*

The most important thing is that the divisions of light tanks (and the Brest 22nd tank division was armed only with T-26) on the banks of the border river have absolutely nothing to do. Tanks don't start, they finish. First, the artillery must suppress the enemy's fire system, then the infantry must establish crossings and seize a bridgehead on the enemy coast - and only after that, a tank horde should burst into the gap **from the depth of the operational formation**. This is exactly how the chief tanker of the Red Army, General Pavlov, reported to the High Meeting (in December 1940), which is why in the "red package" the concentration area for the 22nd TD was not the eastern bank of the Bug, but the village of Zhabinka, 25 km from the Bug! What prevented the 22nd TD from being hidden in advance in the forests even east of this very Zhabinka? But there are enough forests in Belarus ... Who and why drove the tank division into the camp *"on flat terrain, well visible from the enemy"*? Who and why locked two rifle divisions in the "mousetrap" of an ancient fortress?

We will begin to collect answers to these questions - as was customary in ancient times - starting with those who are junior in rank. EAT.

Sinkovsky. on the eve of the war - major, head of the operational department of the headquarters of the 28th rifle corps of the 4th army: *"The command of the 28th SC filed a petition with the command of the 4th army for permission to withdraw the 6th and 42nd divisions from the fortress. Permission was not followed ... "* [44].

F.I. Shlykov, on the eve of the war - a member of the Military Council (in other words, a commissar) of the 4th Army: *"We wrote to the district (i.e. the command of the Western OVO. - M.S.) to be allowed to withdraw one division from Brest, some warehouses and hospital. We were allowed to transfer to another area only part of the hospital..."* [44]. L.M. Sandalov, on the eve of the war - Colonel,

Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, in his monograph on the military operations of the army writes: *"It was urgently required to change the deployment of the 22nd Panzer Division, to which, however, the district did not give its consent ..."*

So, everyone is aware of the fallacy of placing three divisions directly on the line of border pillars. But - the command of the corps is forbidden to withdraw divisions from Brest by the command of the 4th Army, which, in turn, is forbidden to do this by the command of the district. Moreover, a tense struggle is going on around the issue of withdrawing troops from Brest: the corps asks for permission to withdraw all units from the fortress, the army command asks the district headquarters for permission to withdraw at least one division ... But

what does the district command do? D.G.

Pavlov, army general, commander of the Western Front, gave the following testimonies at the

trial: *"...Even at the beginning of June, I **ordered the withdrawal of troops** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) from Brest to the camps. Korobkov did not fulfill my order, as a result of which three divisions were defeated by the enemy when leaving the city ... "* A.A.

Korobkov, major general, commander of the 4th army, gave the following testimonies in

court: *"... I do not plead guilty... I categorically deny Pavlov's testimony... The order to withdraw units from Brest was not given by anyone. I personally have not seen such an order ... "*

Finding himself shoulder to shoulder with Korobkov (they were sitting on the same dock), Pavlov immediately changes his testimony. The following dialogue takes place between the two doomed generals: *"Defendant*

Pavlov: "In June, on my orders, the commander of the 28th Rifle Corps, Popov, was sent with the task of evacuating all troops from Brest to the camps by June 15. Defendant Korobkov: I didn't know about that.

This means that Popov should be prosecuted responsibility..." [67].

Pay attention, dear reader, to WHAT is the subject of dispute and litigation. The generals are not arguing about whether Pavlov's orders were correct, timely, effective ... They cannot agree with each other on whether the order was given to withdraw troops from Brest or not. How can this be a matter of controversy? Even in kindergarten, the boss's orders are issued in writing, recorded in a journal, added to a daddy with

ribbons. The order of the headquarters of the Western Special Military District was (or was not) issued three weeks before the start of the war. In absolutely peaceful time. Did the German saboteurs steal him from the safe? And why is the order of the district command given "over the head" of the army commander directly to the corps commander? The same 28th SC, whose command, according to Major Sinkovsky, not only received an order, but even *"permission to withdraw two divisions from the Brest Fortress did not receive ..."*.

As soon as we started talking about Brest, then it's time to recall the history of the defense of what, according to the plans of the Soviet command, was to act as the "Brest fortress". Of course, we are not talking about the dungeons of an old and fairly dilapidated castle, but about **the Brest fortified area (UR**

No. 62). The Volga flows into the Caspian Sea, horses eat oats, twice two equals four, the gullible and naive Stalin broke all the pillboxes on the old (1939) state border, but they did not manage to build anything worthwhile on the new one. It is "everyone knows". This is stated in any book about the war. This is taught in school. Everyone united in defending this "truth": from Viktor Suvorov to any party "historian".

But the awl bursts uncontrollably out of the bag. In issue 4 for 1989, the Military Historical Journal, the press organ of the USSR Ministry of Defense, published a table with numbers reflecting the state of fortified areas on the new border by June 1, 1941. The editors generously allocated 5.5 x 2 for this table, 5 cm magazine area. Information was typed in microscopic letters that 128 (one hundred twenty-eight) long-term firing structures were built in the Brest UR and another 380 (three hundred eighty) DOSs were under construction. The tiny area did not allow readers to be informed that the deadline for completion was August 1, 1941, and work was in full swing from dawn to dusk. By the way, no one blew up anything on the old border either. On the contrary, on May 25, 1941, another

government decree was issued on measures to reconstruct and re-equip the "old" URs. The completion date was set for October 1, 1941. Some pillboxes of the Minsk UR are intact to this day. One and a half meter concrete

withstood all the shelling, and when the Germans, already during the occupation of Belarus, tried to blow up pillboxes, they soon had to abandon this idea because of the huge consumption of explosives that were scarce in the

war ... Let us return, however, to Brest. As Sandalov writes (at that time he was the chief of staff of the 4th Army, in the zone of which the Brest UR was built), "*all sapper units of the 4th Army and the 33rd engineering regiment of the district were involved in the construction of the Brest fortified area ... In March-April 1941, an additional 10,000 people of the local population were recruited with 4,000 carts... since June, by order of the district, two battalions from each rifle regiment of the division were involved in defensive work...*" [79]. On June 16, the construction rush was once again spurred on by the resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's

Commissars of the USSR "On accelerating the putting of fortified areas on alert" [3]. Thus, we will not be much mistaken if we assume that by June 22 most of the 380 unfinished DOSs of the Brest UR were already ready or almost ready. Nobody knows the exact numbers. Thus, the summation (according to the table in VIZh) of the number of DOSs built in four fortified areas of the Western Front gives the number 332, but on the next page, in the text of the article, it is said that "505 DOSs were built by June 1941." Pavlov and Klimovskikh give an even larger figure at the trial - 600 [67].

Be that as it may, but on average, there were **three** concrete boxes dug into the ground **per one kilometer** of the front of the Brest fortified area, the walls of which could withstand a direct hit by a heavy field howitzer shell. One - fully built, and two more of the same boxes, partially completed. This is in addition to the river Bug created by nature itself, along which the border then passed. But this is on average. In fact, the Brest UR was located in one of the world's largest marsh regions (Belarusian Polesie). In such terrain, pillboxes should have covered only a few available road directions. Accordingly, the pillboxes were not built in a "chain", but in separate "bushes" (defense nodes). So, in the area of the town of Semyatyche, near the Sedlec-Belovezh road, there were 20 pillboxes, which were occupied by the 17th machine-gun artillery battalion.

Even if we assume that not a single unit of special weapons was installed in any pillbox of the Brest UR, then in this case, simply by placing machine-gun platoons of rifle divisions in them, it was possible to create a continuous zone of fire damage. There were machine guns. According to the state of April 1941, in the rifle division of the Red Army there were 392 light and 166 heavy machine guns. By state. In fact, by June 22, 1941, the Red Army was armed with 170,000 light machine guns and 76,000 heavy machine guns [35, p. 351]. However, all these improvisations were superfluous. As follows from the testimony of the commander of the Western Front, Pavlov, a third of the DOSs were already armed. Moreover, it is by no means armed with dilapidated cannons, allegedly taken from the fortified

areas on the old border. Comrade I.N. Shveikin met the war as a lieutenant in the 18th machine gun and artillery battalion of the Brest UR. He testifies: *"... the quality and combat equipment of the pillboxes was much higher compared to the pillboxes on the old border. There were only four guns per battalion, and the rest of the weapons were machine guns. Here, many pillboxes (45% of the total. - MS) had one or more guns paired with machine guns ... The guns operated semi-automatically. Spent cartridges fell into special wells outside the pillboxes, which was very convenient. Combat structures were equipped with very good optics..."* [44]. The reader, well-prepared by the communist

"historians", already understood everything: there were pillboxes, but stupid Stalin did not allow them to be taken. To prevent Hitler from having "an excuse to attack". The logic is amazing. Not to mention the fact that neither Stalin nor Hitler ever needed "reasons" (because at the right time they made them in any quantity themselves), compared with the very fact of building many hundreds of concrete boxes on the banks of the border river, engaging them in the darkness of the night garrisons could not "provoke" anyone and anything. That is why they were occupied. Every night.

"... At the end of May, combat alerts became more frequent, during which we occupied our pillboxes ... We spent the night in the pillboxes, and in the morning, after lights out, we returned to our dugouts. In June, such alarms became almost daily. On the night of June 21 - too. On Saturday, June 21, as usual, we watched a movie after dinner. It was striking that, unlike last Saturdays, there were no civilians to be seen on the benches.

residents from nearby villages. After the film, the lights out sounded, but we didn't have to sleep for a long time: at 2 o'clock in the morning we were alerted and in half an hour we were already in our pillboxes, where wagons with ammunition soon arrived ... "

These are lines from the memoirs of L.V. Irina, who met the war as a cadet of the training company of the 9th machine gun and artillery battalion of the Grodno UR [83]. There is no reason to doubt that the Brest UR lived in the spring of 1941 according to the same orders and directives.

Everything is relative. The "Mannerheim Line", which historians recalled a thousand and one times, had only 166 concrete pillboxes at a front of 135 km, and most of the pillboxes were machine-gun, with a meager composition of special equipment (in the pillboxes of the first stage of construction there was no electricity, running water, toilet and telephone communications), and only two dozen so-called "millionaire pillboxes" were armed with guns.

How was all this used? The Red Army gnawed through the Mannerheim Line with huge losses throughout February 1940. The Germans practically did not notice the existence of the Brest fortified area. In the report of the headquarters of the Army Group "Center" (June 22, 1941, 20:30) we find only a brief statement:

"Border fortifications were broken through in the sectors of all corps of the 4th Army" (i.e., just in the defense zone of the Brest UR) [61]. And in Guderian's memoirs, we will not find a single mention of any battles during the breakthrough of the defense line of the Brest fortified area.

But. Some pillboxes fought until the end of June 1941. The Germans had already occupied Bialystok and Minsk, reached Bobruisk, began crossing the Berezina, and at that time the 3rd company of the 17th bullet battalion of the Brest UR held 4 pillboxes on the banks of the Bug near the Polish town of Semyatyche up to 30 June! [4] The concrete floors withstood all the shelling, and only having the opportunity to surround the pillboxes and break through their walls with heavy land mines, the Germans were able to suppress the resistance of a handful of heroes.

And what did everyone else do? "Most of the personnel of the 17th battalion retreated in the direction of Vysokoe, where the headquarters of the 62nd fortified area was located ... A group of personnel of the 18th bulbat from the Brest region retreated in the same direction ..." [79]. So, calmly and melancholy, Sandalov describes the fact of mass desertion,

that took place during the first hours of the war. Happens. In war, as in war. In any army in the world there is confusion, panic, and flight. That is why there are commanders in the army, in order to cheer up some in such a situation, to shoot others, but to achieve the fulfillment of a combat mission. What did the commander of the 62nd UR do when crowds of Red Army soldiers who abandoned their firing positions ran to his headquarters in Vysokoe?

"The commander of the Brest fortified area, Major General Puzyrev, with part of the units that had retreated to him in Vysokoye, on the very first day withdrew to Belsk (40 km from the border. - M.S.), and then further to the east ..." [79]. How is it "departed"? The air regiments, as we are told, "relocated" to the deep rear in order to receive new aircraft there. Instead of those previously abandoned at airfields. Let's say. But what was Comrade Puzyrev going to get "further east"? A new mobile pillbox

on wheels? Perhaps these questions were asked to him by someone. The answers are still unknown. *"Born 1890 Commandant of the 62nd fortified area. Died November 18, 1941. There is no data on the place of burial "* - that's all that the Military History Journal told its readers. How, where, under what circumstances General Puzyrev died, why in the autumn of 1941 he continued to be listed as the "commandant" of the non-existent fortified area - all this is covered with a dense da

LADY WITH FICUS

The documentary detective genre requires bringing together all the storylines and a clear indication of the main villains. Alas, nothing but a lot of question marks, the author is not able to offer readers. Alas, the elucidation of the true causes of the greatest and unprecedented tragedy in the history of Russia has not become the subject of an authoritative **judicial or at least parliamentary investigation over the past sixty years**. This situation, which is completely unthinkable in any civilized state, has become familiar to our society and has not caused any protest or even surprise for a long time. The only available documents

(declassified and published in the early 1990s materials of the investigation and trial of the commander of the Western Front, D.G. Pavlov) do not bring us any closer to answering the questions posed above. The so-called "investigators" tortured Pavlov to extract testimony about his participation in the imaginary conspiracies of 1937 and his connections with the "enemies of the people" arrested at that time. Pavlov was not asked a single specific military-operational question (and the qualifications of the KGB "investigators" did not allow them to either formulate the question or comprehend the answer). In fact, there was no investigation - there was a demonstrative reprisal against those whom Stalin decided to sacrifice to further intimidate the surviving generals.

As a result, the source base at our disposal does not allow us to move beyond untested hypotheses and leading questions. One of these questions arose while reading the following passage from Boldin's memoirs. So, the first day of the

war. At noon, Boldin flies from Minsk to a military airfield 35 km east of Bialystok. *"...every minute counts. We*

must hurry to the 10th army. There is no passenger car at the airport. I take a lorry ("one and a half" is a GAZ-AA truck. – M.S), get into the cab and instruct the driver to go to Bialystok ... Our lorry rushes along a busy highway. But this is no ordinary revival. What we see on it

looks more like a hustle and bustle of completely bewildered people who do not know where and why they are

going or driving... ...Several cars appeared. Ahead is a ZIS-101 (a passenger car of an executive class. - M.S.). Wide ficus leaves protrude from its open windows. It turned out that this was the car of some regional chief. There are two women and two boys in it. "Do you really have

nothing else to carry at a time like this but flowers?" It would be better if they took old people or children, I appeal to women. Heads down, they are silent. The driver turned away, and it was clear that he felt ashamed. Our

cars parted... ...An emka

appeared on the highway (an M-1 passenger car. - M.S). In it is an engineer of one of the construction sites of the fortified area. I suggest that the engineer put my lorry in order, and I myself take his car and continue on my way to the 10th Army. We need to get there as quickly as possible. Eighteen hours. The bright sun illuminates the road..." [80].

Reread this passage, dear reader. Two, three times. He's worth it. Before us is the key to unraveling what is commonly called the "mystery of 1941." First of

all, let's define the circumstances of time and place of action. The meeting

with the lady and the ficus takes place east of Bialystok, i.e. 100 km from the border, in the afternoon of June 22, 1941, i.e. about 12 hours after the start of hostilities, 4-5 hours after Molotov's speech on All-Union Radio. The war has begun, and everyone already knows it. One of the many

consequences of this tragic fact is that all cars, without exception, are now subject to mobilization and transfer to the military authorities. The commander of the district, and in his absence, the first deputy commander of the Western Special Military District, Comrade Boldin, is now the highest authority for all military and civilians on the territory of Belarus. Boldin is not in a hurry to go fishing. He must urgently arrive at the headquarters of the 10th Army, create and direct the actions of the main shock group of the front. From how quickly and in what

physical condition it will arrive at its destination, depend, without any exaggeration, the lives of hundreds of thousands

of people. Conclusion - Boldin not only had the right, but simply had to transfer from the plywood booth of a rattling, very unreliable "lorry" to the leather chair of a comfortable high-speed limousine. He - Boldin - is already at war, his time and his well-being have already ceased to be his personal matter, in which personal modesty can be shown. Does Boldin

himself understand this? Undoubtedly. He repeats phrases several times that "you need to hurry", and immediately takes the first oncoming "emka" for himself. But at the same time, the powerful and reliable "government" ZIS-101 lets go, limiting itself to only a caustic remark. From which (remarks) only the driver became ashamed - but not the passengers of the ZIS. Silence was their answer. After that, *"our cars parted."* In principle, this information is

already more than enough to determine which particular "regional chief" this car and this ficus belonged to, and why the ZIS was not driving alone, but the first in the "group of cars".

Bialystok at that time was a provincial town with a population of 150 thousand people and several textile factories. In Poland, it was an abandoned eastern outskirts; as part of the USSR, it became a distant western borderland. "Some bosses" in such cities traveled by tram, big (by local standards) bosses - by "emkas". There have always been big problems with cars in the USSR. The representative ZIS-101 in Bialystok could only be at the disposal of three people:

the first secretary of the regional committee of the Party of Lovers of Common Property and the heads of the regional departments of the NKVD and the NKGB. The fourth, as they say, is not given. And only the fear of the "organs" driven into the bone can explain the fact that the lieutenant general did not dare to shake the ficus to the side of the road. Having thus determined the ownership of the machine and

women, let us now turn our attention to the ficus pot.

Liberation campaigns have always been accompanied by a sharp jump in the well-being of the military, party and, above all, the NKVD authorities. After the Victory was won with the blood of millions,

this phenomenon blossomed into a luxuriant terry flower. They were dragged by cars, wagons, echelons. They dismantled and transported Goering's luxurious villa to the Moscow region, melted down the golden crown of Hohenzollerns on the head of a cane ...

In January 1948, during a search at the dacha of "Marshal of Victory" Zhukov, 323 skins of sables, monkeys, seals, 160 mink skins, 4. thousand meters of silk, woolen and other expensive fabrics, 44 carpets, 55 "valuable paintings of classical paintings of large sizes in artistic frames", 7 boxes with porcelain and crystal dishes... During a search of Lieutenant General Telegin (a member of the Military Council of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, or, more simply, Zhukov's closest associate) , *"over 16 kg of items were seized from silver, 218 cuts of woolen and silk fabrics, 21 hunting rifles, many antiques made of porcelain and faience, furs, tapestries made by French and Flemish masters of the 17th and 17th centuries..."* [182] . In 1939, these "flowers" were just in bloom, but already during the "liberation

campaign" in Poland in the zone of Soviet occupation near Lvov, the property of the wife of the American ambassador to Poland Biddle (a lady from a very wealthy family) disappeared, including - a huge collection of antiques. For almost two years, the Americans pestered the Soviet Foreign Ministry with a request to look into this issue. They were very surprised how 200 (two hundred) boxes with paintings, furs, carpets, silverware, etc. could disappear without a

trace in a country with abolished private property. In the end, the patience of our diplomats snapped, and on June 5, 1941, Comrade Lozovsky, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, told US Ambassador Steingardt verbatim the following: *" ... a revolution was taking place in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus at that time. Mr. Ambassador obviously thinks that when people make a revolution, they only think about how to save someone's property. The Soviet government is not the custodian of Mr. Biddle's property..."* [69, p. 724] Having thus poured out their hearts, the Soviet authorities returned 47 boxes and promised to return the rest "if anything else is found".

This whole long story is told to the fact that the stupid ficus was hardly the only valuable item in the house of the chief Bialystok Chief. In the autumn of 1939, there was also a "revolution taking place", and in the family castles of the Radziwills, pretty little things also disappeared. The fact

that the "first lady of Bialystok" dragged a ficus with her suggests that **the gathering took place in extreme haste, in a terrible panic, in a state close to insanity. And why? What, in fact, so scared**

the lady with the ficus and her husband? The answer to this question is not as simple as it might seem at first glance. We know this today, the beginning of which was the shooting at the border in the early morning of June 22, 1941. But who could have known this at noon on the first day?

From all the loudspeakers rumbled: "And if a hardened enemy comes to us, he will be beaten everywhere and everywhere." In Moscow, Directive No. 3 was being prepared for sending to the troops, according to which, by June 24, hostilities were to be transferred to enemy territory. And what doubts could there be in the reality of these plans - based on the actual balance of forces of the parties? Even if there could be doubts, then where did such an unreasoning confidence come from that one must run wherever

one's eyes look? Did the lady's husband, by virtue of his official position, know the true state of affairs? But in this case, there was even less reason to panic. In the defense zone of the 10th Army, on a front of 200 km, ten Wehrmacht infantry divisions were advancing. With horse-drawn artillery, without a single tank. According to our regulations, an offensive on such a front required three times as many forces. By the time the pot of ficus was thrust into the interior of an expensive car, the forward detachments of the Wehrmacht were just finishing the crossing over the border Bug. Even if we assume that the Big Chief did not believe in the ability of the Red Army to offer at least some resistance, then in this case there were no reasonable grounds for haste. From the border to Bialystok 75-100 kilometers. There are two rivers on the way: if you move from the south-west, then the Narew, if from the north, then the Biebrza. Even if it's not God knows what rivers, not the Dnieper and not the Vistula, but without a bridge across them, an infantry di

it is still necessary to point, and how much time will it take just for the Wehrmacht division to pass through it, i.e. 15,000 men and 5,000 horses?

So before Thursday-Friday, the Germans in Bialystok could not be expected. There is plenty of time to collect. There was no need to rush about and grab in horror the first ficus that came to hand ...

While the author was writing and rewriting further chapters of this sad story, the Olma-Press publishing house in 2002 published a book entitled "15 Meetings with KGB General Belchenko" [62]. This valiant security officer,

who led the suppression of popular uprisings in Central Asia, Budapest and Tbilisi, on the eve of the war, worked as the head of the Bialystok NKGB Directorate. On page 129, the general assures that he sent his wife to Minsk on a "lorry". If this is true, then the ficus was from the house of the first secretary of the regional committee Kudryaev or the head of the NKVD Directorate Fukin. Be that as it may, Belchenko's memoirs supplement the picture of the events of June 1941 with extremely colorful strokes: "... At about 6 o'clock

in the morning the bureau of the Belostok regional party committee gathered ... bases and warehouses at the moment the enemy enters the city..." Pay attention - there are no doubts, no "ifs". At the third HOUR of the war, the Białyystok communist

comrades are already unshakably convinced that the enemy will "enter the city". Even faster than it will be possible to take out the contents of military warehouses.

However, let's not forget that, in addition to the regional departments of the NKVD and the NKGB, the Chekist "dragon" in Bialystok had one more, third head - a special department (military counterintelligence) of the 10th Army. In 2008, M. I. Meltyukhov published the full text of the report of the head of the special department (at that time this structure was called the "3rd Department") of the 10th Army (RGVA f.9, op. 39, d. 99, l. 330 -340). If you believe what the regimental commissar writes (in this case, this is a military rank, not a position), Comrade Los, the "combat Chekist groups" created "for explosion and destruction" did not wait for the enemy to enter the city:

"The panic was facilitated by the fact that on the night of June 22-23, the entire party and Soviet leadership of the Bialystok region shamefully fled. All employees of the NKVD and the NKGB, headed by the heads of the bodies, also fled.

Los claims that Belchenko fled on the night of June 22-23. Boldin met the fugitive car in the afternoon. This coincides with the story of Belchenko himself: "... on the first day of the war, I sent my family

on a lorry towards Minsk. The families of my deputies rode with her... The gathering took place in turmoil. As always (???) happens in such cases, the most important thing was forgotten. So, my wife did not take a single document proving her identity ... "The detail is most interesting. I forgot to take it - or did the husband carefully check that there were no

identity documents with his wife? In this case, it was wise foresight - in case of a meeting with the working people of the Land of Soviets, who (the working people) for the first time in many years had a real opportunity to express their love for the glorious

Chekists and their wives.

Part 2

SEVEN DO NOT BEAT ONE

..."YOUR LAST HOUR IS COMING, BOURGEOIS..."

The places are amazing. The most picturesque forests are the age-old oak, beech, plane tree. Clean rivers, in which fish are caught in abundance to this day, fertile land. And what kind of music of ancient Slavic antiquity do the names of cities and rivers of this land sound like: Goryn, Ubort, Radomyshl, Turya, Kremenets, Slavuta, Yavorov ... Alas, the history of Galicia and Volhynia is very far from the blissful song of universal love. The fire of insane enmity - religious, national, class - more than once or twice devastated this rich land. In the middle of the 17th century, here, near Zbarazh and Berestechko, the Cossacks of Bogdan Khmelnytsky frenziedly cut themselves with the Polish gentry, and at the beginning of the 20th century, the fighters of the First Cavalry Army, sung by I. Babel,

competed in senseless cruelty with their opponents. It was in these places, richly watered with tears and blood, in the triangle Lutsk - Brody - Rivne, **that one of the main battles of the Second World War, the largest tank battle of the 20th century**, unfolded at the end of June 1941. The battle, known (and it would be more correct to say - almost unknown to anyone) under the name

"counterattack of the mechanized corps of the South-Western Front." Before starting an investigation into the circumstances of this "mighty Stalinist blow" - a small technical remark. After Eastern Poland was forcibly turned into the western outskirts of the Soviet Union, along with the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Poles, there was also a massive "expulsion" of Polish-sounding names from the geographical map. Stanisławów turned into Ivano Frankovsk, Zholkev turned into Nesterov, Radzvills into Chervonoarmeysk, Krystynopol into Chervonograd, Proskurov into Khmelnytsky, and so on. Therefore, to make life easier for the most attentive readers who want to check this text with a map, all toponyms found in 1941 documents will be duplicated by their modern names.

As in the tragic story of the defeat of the cavalry-mechanized group of the Western Front near Grodno, in Ukraine everything also began with **Directive No. 3**.

We remind you once again that at 21:15 on June 22, 1941, the People's Commissar Defense Timoshenko ordered:

"... with powerful concentric strikes by mechanized corps, all aviation of the Southwestern Front and other troops of the 5th and 6th armies, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the Lublin region.

The rest of the forces of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts (26th, 12th, 18th, 9th armies) were assigned purely defensive tasks: "We will firmly secure ourselves and prevent the enemy from invading our territory ..." The

full text of this directive was published by the "Military historical journal" only 48 years after its signing [182], but in a summary it has been known for a long time. At the same time, every Soviet historian considered it his duty (or, more precisely, had a party task) to scold our main commanders for the fact that, "based on an unreasonable reassessment of the capabilities of the troops, they gave an order that was clearly unrealistic, and therefore impossible."

Later, after the awl finally got out of the bag, and from the declassified documents it became clear that the capabilities of the Red Army (composition, strength, armament, reserves, provision of ammunition and fuel) made it possible to set tasks to capture not only Lublin (just something 80 km west of the border), the focus of criticism has changed. Now it is customary to scold Directive No. 3 for the fact that it indicated completely **unrealistic timing** for the counterattack. Thus, one comrade, a staff officer with extensive experience in operational departments, wrote a whole article about the fact that it takes at least a month, or even better, two, to develop and prepare for an operation of this magnitude.

Let's not argue. We will respect the opinion of a professional. two so two. But who said that the planning of the offensive operation and the operational deployment of troops in Western Ukraine began only in the late evening of June 22, 1941? Latest

pre-war plans for the Southwestern Front (Kyiv Special Military District) have not been declassified to this day. There is no longer the state that included the territory of the Kiev District, all the illegal agents without exception, who provided intelligence information for the development of these plans, have passed away, all the military equipment mentioned in these plans has long since gone to be melted down, has changed many times over the past six years. For decades, the capacity of the road network mentioned in these plans ... In a word, all

reasonable reasons for classifying these yellowed pages have disappeared. But no - the close-knit ranks of veterans of party history in unison curse the "defector and traitor" V. Suvorov, and the secret of the Big Plan is cherished like a needle with the life of Koshchei the Deathless, which, as you know, is in an egg, and an egg is in a hollow, and a hollow - across the sea, and so on ...

But the awl uncontrollably breaks out of the bag. At the end of 1991, at a moment of slight confusion that seized the KGB after the bronze statue of the "iron Felix" (the creator of the Cheka Dzerzhinsky) on a steel cable floated over the angry crowd of thousands of people on August 21, one curious document broke out of the archive silence: "Considerations according to the plan for the strategic deployment of the forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies. The document was written in a single copy, by hand, by the Deputy Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff of the Red Army, Major General (future Marshal and Chief of the General Staff) Vasilevsky. The text is edited by the hand of Vatutin or Zhukov. The date of writing is not indicated, judging by the content - the document was compiled no earlier than May 15, 1941. This date is usually used to designate it. There are no

signatures of Tymoshenko and Zhukov, there is no Stalin's resolution on the document. Let's not digress now to discuss the course of the discussion that arose after the publication of this, without exaggeration, sensational document. Moreover, the main attention of the public was drawn not to actual operational considerations, but to a completely ordinary (if you are guided by common sense, and not by propaganda clichés) phrase : *army*

at the moment when it will be at the stage of deployment" [6, p. 217]. The idea is quite obvious

and by no means new to the Soviet military leadership. So, back in April 1939, K.A. Meretskov (at that time the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District), speaking at the analysis of the command-staff game held by the Military Council of the district, said: *"At the moment when our opponents will mobilize their armies, they will take their troops to our borders, we will not sit and wait. Our operational training, the training of troops must be directed in such a way as to ensure in practice the complete defeat of the enemy already at a time when he has not yet had time to gather all his forces ..."* [1, p. 141].

The veterans of Soviet propaganda "science" have already managed to explain to everyone who is still capable of listening to them that the May "Considerations" is just a rough draft, drawn up (on 15 sheets, with four appendices and seven maps) by General Vasilevsky out of boredom, in free from main work time. While they tried to fool the public with a "discussion" of this level, other documents were declassified and published [6, 16].

Ultimately, by the end of the 90s, the following became known components of the Big Plan:

- Memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks IV. Stalin and V.M. Molotov "On the fundamentals of the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and in the East", w /

n, no later than August 16, 1940 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 239, l. 1-37). - A document with a similar title, but with a number (No. 103202) and the exact date of signing (09/18/1940)

(TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 239, l. 197-244). - Memorandum of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov No. 103313 (the document begins with the words *"I report for your approval the main conclusions from your instructions given on October 5, 1940 when considering plans for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR for 1941"*, in connection with which it is usually called "the updated October strategic deployment plan" (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 242, l. 84-90).

- Memorandum of the chief of staff of the Kiev OVO by decision of the Military Council of the South-Western Front according to the deployment plan for 1940, w / n, no later than December 1940 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 239, l. 245-277). - Excerpts from the report of the General

Staff of the Red Army "On the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the West and in the East", b / n, dated March 11, 1940 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 241, l. 1 - 16). It is noteworthy that this document - contrary to all the rules and traditions of the publication of historical documents - was declassified only with huge reductions.

- Directive of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to the commander of the troops of the Western OVO on the development of a plan for the operational deployment of the district troops, w / n, April 1941 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, d. 237, l. 48-64).

- The above-mentioned "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union in the event of a war with Germany and its allies", w / n, not earlier than May 15, 1941 (TsAMO, f. 16, op. 2951, file 237, l. 1-15). Documents that actually reveal

the operational plans of the Soviet command should also include the materials of the January (1941) operational-strategic games held by the highest command staff of the Red Army. We are led to this conclusion not only by simple everyday logic, but also by Marshal AM Vasilevsky,

published only in 1992 (after the author's death), which directly indicates that "in January 1941, *when the proximity of the war was already felt quite clearly, the main points of the operational plan were tested in a strategic military game with the participation of the highest command staff of the armed forces*" [191]. Strictly speaking, there is plenty of information to think about. Historians have at their disposal five variants of the general plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army and materials on the operational plans of

the two most important fronts: the Southwestern and the Western. The content of the operational-strategic plans of the Soviet command has already been analyzed in detail in the works of P. Bobylev, V. Danilov, V. Kiselev, M. Meltyukhov, B. Petrov and

other Russian historians. For our book, it suffices to note only three key points. Firstly, there was an

operational plan for a big war in the West (*"An operational plan for the war against Germany existed, and it was worked out not only in the General Staff, but also detailed by the commanders of the troops and headquarters of the western border military districts of the Soviet Union."* - A.M. Vasilevsky). It is strange that this needs to be especially proved, but other communist propagandists, in their "diligence beyond reason", even went so far as to assert that the naive and gullible Stalin replaced the development of plans for military operations by lovingly looking at Ribbentrop's signature on the notorious Non-Aggression Pact.

Secondly, all operational plans known to us are in fact one and the same document, only slightly changing from one version to another. There is not only a semantic, but also a clear textual coincidence of all variants of the Big Plan. Thirdly, without exception, all variants represent a plan **for an offensive**

operation carried out outside the state borders of the USSR, while Germany is invariably named the main adversary. **Combat operations on their own territory were not even considered as one of the possible scenarios** for the development of events in the war. The entire toponymy of the theater of alleged military operations is the names of Polish and East Prussian cities and rivers.

As an illustration of what has been said, we will cite excerpts from two documents (for ease of comparison, the author has highlighted some key words). So, the

May (1941) "Considerations on the strategic plan deployment": "...

*The first **strategic goal** of the actions of the Red Army troops is to defeat the main forces of the German army deployed south of the Brest-Demblin line, and reach the front of Ostrolenka, r. Narev, Lovich, Lodz, Oppeln, Olomouc...*

*... **The immediate task** is to defeat the German army east of the river. Vistula and in the Krakow direction, go to the river. Vistula and take possession*

area of Katowice. For what: to deliver **the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front** in the direction of Krakow,

Katowice ... **to deliver an auxiliary blow by the left wing of the Western Front** ... in order to pin down the Warsaw grouping and assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the Lublin grouping of the enemy .. .

... The composition and tasks of the fronts deployed in the West:

Southwestern Front - with a concentric attack by the armies of the right wing of the front, encircle and destroy the main enemy grouping east of the river. the Vistula in the Lublin region;

at the same time, with a blow from the front of Seniava, Przemyśl, Lutów, defeat the enemy forces in the Krakow and Sandomierz-Kielce directions and capture the area of Krakow, Katowice, Kielce ... "

And here is another (earlier) document: "Note of the chief of staff of the Kyiv OVO on the decision of the Military Council of the Southwestern Front on the deployment plan for 1940" [16, pp. 484-498]. In parentheses, we note that already in December 1940, the term "South Western Front" was used! "...

Tasks of the Southwestern Front:

The immediate **strategic task** is to defeat, in cooperation with the left wing of the Western Front, the German armed forces in the areas of Lublin, Kielce, Radom, Krakow and reach the front of the river on the 30th day of the operation. Pilica, Petrokov, Oppeln, Neustadt...

The immediate task is to encircle and destroy the enemy east of the river in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front. Vistula and on the 10th day of the operation reach the river. Vistula and develop the offensive in the direction of Kielce - Krakow.

On the right, the Western Front (Baranovichi headquarters) has the task of striking the left-flank 4th Army in the direction of Drogichin, Sedlec, Demblin **to assist the Southwestern Front** in defeating the enemy's **Lublin** grouping ... " Anyone who is not too lazy

to find all the above-mentioned cities on the map of Poland, can make sure that the tasks defined in these documents fully coincide in terms of goals, deadlines and milestones (see Map No. 3). Apparently, both of these documents were developed in close cooperation and on the basis of some common initial directives.

Thus, the attack on Lublin was planned at least **six months** before the fateful day of June 22, 1941. Moreover, in the document of December 1940, it was planned to deploy a special "cavalry mechanized army" in the Lvov-Yavorov-Nesterov region, which was supposed to, advancing in northward, together with the 5th Army, occupy Lublin "by the end of the third day of the operation." And here we see a coincidence both in form and content with the tasks set on the evening of June 22 by Directive No. 3. Moreover (and this is very important to

note), Directive No. 3 was a cautious, moderate and restrained document in comparison with the pre-war plans of the South Western Front. Thus, according to the December plan, the attack on Lublin was **only one of** the blows inflicted by the troops of the Southwestern Front. Moreover, out of a total of 11 tank divisions and 13 tank brigades of the front, it was then planned to involve only 6 divisions and 3 brigades in the offensive against Lublin. Other armies of the Southwestern Front in December 1940 were assigned no less important tasks. On the 10-12th day of the offensive, the troops of the 6th, 26th, and 12th armies were to reach the line of the Vistula and Dunaets rivers (the depth of the offensive was 120-130 km) and capture the crossings across these rivers at

Sandomierz and Tar-Nuv. "So what? - the incredulous reader will object to us. "All this proves nothing." And he will be absolutely right. In any headquarters, even more so - in the General Staff of the huge, heavily armed Soviet Union, a lot of all sorts of different plans are being developed. Most of which are then destroyed in the prescribed manner, signed by a representative of the counterintelligence service. So, maybe Comrade Stalin rejected the aforementioned plans of the military command as contradicting the "invariably peaceful foreign policy of the USSR", and ordered to dig trenches and strengthen the defense?

No. This is an erroneous assumption that does not correspond to historical truth. The plans for a large-scale offensive by the Red Army from the territory of the Lvov ledge to southern Poland were approved and accepted for execution. Which is confirmed not by papers (which can be forged), not by memoirs (which are sometimes written by unscrupulous people "to order"), but by the ACTUAL DEPLOYMENT of troops carried out in the spring and summer of 1941.

In accordance with pre-war plans, it was planned to deploy four fronts on the western borders of the USSR: Northern, North Western, Western and South Western. The boundaries between the first three fronts were simply lines drawn in colored pencil on a top secret map hidden in a highly guarded safe. But the Southwestern Front (South-3. f.) had completely tangible, natural boundaries.

Northern flank Yu-3. f. was impenetrably closed by a strip of Pripjat swamps, which stretches strictly from west to east, from Brest to Mozyr 400 km deep into the territory of the USSR. Polissya is an absolutely impenetrable forest for the military equipment of that era, swampy, indented by hundreds of small rivers. They say that there were villages in which not a single German soldier was seen during the three years of occupation.

The southern flank of the front rested on the Danube Delta (an equally impassable network of large and small channels) and the Black Sea coast. Thus, the territory Yu-3. f. It was actually an isolated theater of military operations that did not have operational communication with its neighbors (hereinafter we will call it the "southern theater of operations").

According to the December 1940 plan , **seven armies** were to be deployed in this theater of operations , comprising **76 rifle and 7 cavalry divisions**.

In the May (1941) "Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan" on Yu-3. front it was planned to deploy **eight armies**, numbering **74 rifle and 5 cavalry divisions**.

In fact, at the end of June 1941, **eight armies were deployed in the southern theater of operations**. Six armies in the first echelon near the border (from north to south): 5 A, 6 A, 26 A, 12 A, 18 A, 9 A. Two more armies were unloaded in the deep operational rear of the front: 16 A in the Shepetovka area and 19 A in the Cherkasy region - Bila Tserkva. In total, **61 rifle divisions** were deployed in the southern theater of operations (thirty-two as part of Yu-3. f, thirteen as part of the Southern Front, sixteen as part of 19 A and 16 A) **and 5 cavalry divisions**.

Now let's move on to assessing the size of the main striking force of the Red Army - tank and motorized divisions. According to the December plan as part of Yu-3. f., deployed **11 tank**

divisions and 13 tank brigades, 5 motorized divisions and 6 motorized brigades. A direct and unambiguous comparison of the December (1940) and May (1941) plans in this part is impossible - in February 1941 the structure of the tank forces was radically changed, the brigades were disbanded, and almost all divisions became part of 29 mechanized corps. But one thing is certain - the planned grouping of mechanized troops in the southern theater of operations has grown significantly and, according to the "Considerations" dated May 15, 1941, should have included **28 tank and 15 motorized divisions** (out of a total of 40 tank and 20 motorized divisions stationed in the European part of the USSR). Thus, the southern direction (to Krakow - Katowice) clearly became the direction of the main attack. **In fact**, by the start of hostilities in the southern theater of operations, there were

deployed eleven mechanized corps. Here are their numbers:

- 22nd, 4th, 15th, 8th, 16th, 18th, 2nd in the first echelon of the armies, - 9th, 19th, 24th in the Yu-3 command reserve. front and - 5th

in the composition of 16 A. This gigantic grouping consisted of 22 tank and 11 motorized divisions, in addition, along with 16 A, the 57th separate tank division also arrived in the Shepetovka-Slavuta region (from Mongolia) . Total: **23 tank and 11 motorized divisions**. What a pity that all this information was not reported to Hitler then! Maybe he would have shot himself four years earlier...

Let's sum up the first results. The actual grouping of Red Army troops in the southern theater of operations was very close to that outlined in pre-war plans. Such a deployment of troops - with a clearly expressed concentration of forces in one direction - could not have taken place in a random way, "by itself."

Undoubtedly, there was a certain Plan, in accordance with which the army of many millions was deployed. The obvious incompleteness of the concentration of troops (the actual number of rifle and tank divisions is 15-20% less than planned) has the simplest explanation: the strategic deployment of the Red Army was carried out according to a schedule that did not involve a German invasion.

"The transfer of troops was planned with the expectation of completing the concentration in the areas outlined by the operational plans from June 1 to July 10, 1941."

For this phrase alone, the authors of the collective monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions" should have been awarded the medal "For Courage" then, in 1992 ...

However, even if none of the documents mentioned above were published, it is not at all difficult to identify the main features of the invasion plan. It is enough to "arrange" the mechanized corps of the South-Western Front on the geographical map and indicate their staffing. And everything will immediately "appear", as in a bath with a developer ...

So, in the first echelon of the Southwestern Front, they deployed (with north to south, from Kovel to Chernivtsi) the following mechanized corps:

	Район дислокации	Танки, всего	в том числе КВ и Т-34	БА	Автомашины	Тягачи
22 МК	Вл.-Волынский — Ровно	712	31	82/70	1226	114
15 МК	Брод — Кременец	749	136	160/94	2035	165
4 МК	Львов	979	414	175/89	2854	274
8 МК	Дрогобыч — Стрый	899	171	172/87	3237	359
16 МК	Станислав — Черновцы	478	4	118/71	1777	193

Note. Armored vehicles: the first number is the total number, the second is including BA-10s armed with a 45 mm cannon.

As you can see, the presence of a powerful strike group of three mechanized corps, the axis of which is the 4th МК, is absolutely indisputable - this mechanized corps is equipped with tanks for almost 100% of the regular strength, and in terms of the number of new heavy and medium tanks it is equal to all other mechanized corps taken together (by armament located in the operational depth of the 9th МК, 19th МК, 24th МК had only a few new tanks each). Let us immediately note that all

The figures relating to the pre-war strength of the tank formations of the Red Army should be considered only as indicative. There was little order in their accounting. The above table was compiled according to a solid monograph [3], but in the memoirs of the former commander of the 8th MK, General Ryabyshev, a figure of 932 tanks is given, according to the Kiev Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the 8th MK had 813 tanks, in the famous, very first open publication of the number of Soviet mechanized corps (BIZH 4/1989), the figure 858 was given ... The situation is the same for other corps.

Now let's move on to the main question: where was the shock 4th MK located on the morning of

June 22, 1941? In the area of Lviv - Nesterov. That is, **exactly where**, according to the "December plan", the shock "cavalry mechanized army" was to be deployed, intended for an attack on Lublin! 60 km south-west of Lvov, in the area of Drohobych-Sambor, we find the 8th MK, and 100 km north-east of Lvov, in the area of Brody-Kremenets, the 15th MK was deployed (see Map No. 4). Two days before the start of the war, all three divisions of the 4th MK began to move west, to the very "edge" of the Lvov salient.

Ryabyshev writes in his memoirs that *"On June 20, 1941, I received from the commander of the troops of the Kiev Special Military District, Colonel-General M.P. Kirponos, a top secret package: I personally was ordered to immediately go to the border and **reconnoiter the area of alleged actions** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) of the 8th mechanized corps"* [194, p. 8]. Under the conditions of the defensive operation, the "area of alleged actions" of the mechanized corps could not be near the border posts. The task of the mechanized corps was to launch a counterattack on the main grouping of enemy forces in the event of its breakthrough into the operational depth of the defense line of the army or front. Further, Ryabyshev, without a shadow of embarrassment, writes: *"Finally, the city of Przemyśl, an ancient fortress, appeared ahead. The San river was the frontier. Further, across the river, the Nazi troops were located. The commander's reconnaissance*

lasted two days ... " Only the invasion of German troops that had actually begun distracted the commander of the 8th mechanized corps from reconnaissance of the adjacent territory. On the morning of June 22, 1941 (at

The MK opened the "red package", and in accordance with the order of the commander of the 26th Army No. 002 **dated May 17, 1941 (!!!)**, the mechanized corps moved west, leaving in the afternoon to the border river San west of Sambir [28, p. 165]. The "red package" with the directive of the headquarters of the Kiev OVO No. 0013 **dated May 31, 1941** was opened by the commander of the 15th MK at 04:45, after which the corps divisions moved towards

Radekhov [29, p. 255]. From this initial area, a tank wedge could equally well fall on Tarnow, Sandomierz and Lublin. The distances from the line Drogobych - Lvov - Brody to these three Polish cities are almost the same: 175-200 km.

According to the conditions of the terrain, the Lublin direction is most preferable - there will not be a single large river in the path of the advancing tank avalanche, the offensive route runs practically in the "corridor" between the Veps and San

rivers. So what kind of "haste" and "unrealism" of Directive No. 3 have our propagandists been talking about for so

many years? For the attack on Lublin, only one thing was missing - an order. This order was given on the evening of June 22, 1941.

At the end of this chapter, it remains to be recalled that it was only after the publication of V. Suvorov's famous book "Icebreaker" that the offensive orientation of Soviet operational plans and the formation of troop groupings conditioned by these plans had to be published. Prior to this, Soviet historians and memoirists calmly and willingly stated that *"the offensive nature of the planned strategic actions influenced the location of positions and troops ... the plan for the strategic deployment and formation of operational groupings of troops to a greater extent reflected offensive goals ..."* [3]. True, such confessions were always accompanied by a proviso that "due to an incorrect assessment of the situation, it was unjustifiably admitted ...". Suvorov simply suggested that we stop considering Soviet generals idiots who do not understand the elementary foundations of operational art, and drew attention to the mental, and most importantly, moral merits of Soviet historians. Of course, the "historians" did not forgive him for this.

It is strange, but the Soviet generals rehabilitated by V. Suvorov did not stand up for him ...

"ARMOR IS STRONG AND OUR TANKS ARE FAST..."

Giving orders is easy. And did the high command of the Red Army take care to ensure that in the offensive zone of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, the threefold superiority of forces necessary according to the canons of military science? No. There

was no triple superiority. The balance of forces of the parties was expressed in completely different figures.

You can count in different ways. You can compare the total number of tank troops deployed by the Wehrmacht and the Red Army throughout the southern theater of operations. This is a reasonable enough approach. Distances in Western Ukraine are not "Siberian", but rather "European". From the deployment areas even the most distant from the border of the 16th MK, 18th MK, 9th MK, 19th MK (i.e. from the cities of Chernivtsi, Mogilev-Podolsky, Novograd-Volynsky, Berdichev), to Lvov 250-300 km. Even when driving on dirt roads at a snail's speed of 10 km / h, such a redeployment could be carried out using only 25-30 engine hours. This is two or three days of measured march. In fact, on dry June roads, with daylight at 18 hours, everything could be done much faster. Finally, there are railroads. Lviv, the historical center of Galicia, is approached by five railways, which could transport mechanized corps from almost anywhere in Ukraine and Moldova, thereby saving the tanks' precious engine life.

In this case, against **728** tanks in the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht and **60** tanks in the only tank brigade of the Romanian army, the Soviet command could put up **5617** tanks.

This is a SEVEN-FOLD numerical superiority. And this figure is very low. We did not take into account the light tanks that were part of the rifle and cavalry divisions of the Red Army (there were no tanks at all in the infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht). We did not take into account 749 BA-10 cannon armored vehicles, which were not inferior to light German tanks in terms of armament and armor protection.

Finally, we did not take into account almost **two thousand tanks** in the 16th and 19th

initially deployed in the Right-Bank Ukraine, in the rear of the Southwestern Front. It can be

considered differently - closer to the harsh historical reality. In fact, only six mechanized corps took part in the hostilities of the first week of the war in Western Ukraine: 22nd MK, 15th MK, 4th MK, 8th MK, 9th MK, 19th MK. Four mechanized corps (16th MK, 18th MK, 24th MK, 2nd MK) were practically inactive or burning gasoline in aimless redeployments. It is unlikely that such a disgrace can be attributed to the category of "objective circumstances", but in life everything was just like that. On the other hand, Romanian tanks (more precisely, French-made tanks from the First World War) did not bother anyone. With this approach (and not taking into account armored vehicles), we come to a ratio of forces **of 1 to 5.5**.

So what other directive, besides the order to move to a decisive offensive, could Timoshenko and Zhukov give **with such a numerical superiority?**

Everything is relative. The Lvov-Sandomierz offensive operation (July - August 1944) was successfully carried out by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, having three tank armies (1, 3, 4th), which were armed with 419, 490, respectively, by the beginning of the operation and 464 tanks and self-propelled guns. In total - 1373 units. Before the start of the Berlin operation, four tank armies (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Guards Tank Armies) included 709, 672, 572, and 395 tanks and self-propelled guns, respectively [167]. In the largest and very successful Vistula-Oder offensive operation (the highest pace and the deepest offensive of Soviet tank troops), four tank armies were armed with 3302 tanks and self-propelled guns - a huge figure, but still significantly inferior to the number of tanks deployed in the southern theater of operations in June 41st.

But maybe in the summer of 1941 we had bad tanks? Obsolete, "incomparable" with enemy tanks? Soviet historians, academicians and generals in countless articles, books, memoirs, confidently answer this question: our tanks of the "old types" (i.e. T-26, BT, T-28) were not bad, but very bad. So bad that for many decades academicians **did not even take them into account in the overall balance of power of the parties**. Who has not put their pen and hand to this campaign

disinformation of their own people! So the "Marshal of Victory" Zhukov himself, in his textbook-famous "Memoirs and Reflections", laments the squalor of Soviet tanks:

"... They were poorly maneuverable and vulnerable to artillery fire... they ran on gasoline and, therefore, were highly flammable... they had insufficiently strong armor..." [15].

Before us is a small literary masterpiece. It is impossible to accuse Zhukov of cheating. Everything he said, down to the last letter, is true. Any tank is "*lightly vulnerable*" (compared, for example, with a reinforced concrete pillbox) and "*low-maneuverable*" (compared to a helicopter). It depends on what you compare it to. The wise Zhukov did not compare Soviet tanks with contemporary German tanks. He does not say at all that the German tanks were "highly maneuverable and invulnerable", and their engines ran on something other than "flammable gasoline." But there is no doubt that out of a thousand people who read the memoirs of the great commander, 999 understood this paragraph precisely in such a way that our tanks are "junk" and "coffins", but the German ones were much better. Well, this is the work of a master! And the honored veteran of the war, General Vladimirovsky, in his academically solid book [92] writes simply and without fanfare: "*By the beginning of the attack on the USSR, Germany undoubtedly had a qualitative superiority over our tanks.*" So here it

is - "undoubtedly had." That's just

who had whom: did Germany have a qualitative superiority in tanks, or did party propaganda have our brains for so many years?

Let's start simple. From definitions. What does the phrase "German tanks were better than ours" even mean? Which German ones are better than which Soviet ones? Is a five-ton Pz-I tankette with two machine guns better than a heavy KV with a three-inch gun? I think that even the most zealous agitpropists will not say such a thing. Or are we talking about the fact that the best German tank Pz-III was superior to our light tank T-27, discontinued in 1934? This is true, but why compare them?

According to the author, a correct analysis of the qualitative state of the tank fleet of the USSR and Germany is possible if at least two conditions are met:

- compared tanks should be of the same functional purpose, one "class"; - it is necessary to take into account the number of tanks of each class in the total volume of the tank fleet.

Guided by these quite obvious requirements, we will proceed to a comparative analysis of the equipment of the opposing tank groupings. The only one in the

southern theater of operations, the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht, consisting of the 13th, 14th, 11th, 16th, and 9th tank divisions, was armed with 728

tanks. According to performance characteristics and functional their purpose can be conditionally divided into FOUR classes: — wedges; -

good light tanks; — fire support tanks; - good medium tanks. To the category of

"tankettes" we will attribute **8 units of Pz-I, 211 Pz-II and 54** so-called "commander tanks", a total of 273 tanks (which is **38%** of the total strength of the 1st tank group). Here is how G. Guderian, the

main ideologist and creator of the German tank forces, describes the history of the development of these "formidable combat vehicles": ... we considered

it necessary to create for the time being such tanks that could be used for training purposes ... this type of tank only allowed installation machine guns in a rotating turret. Such tanks, designated Pz-I, could be manufactured by 1934 and used as training vehicles until the battle tanks were ready ... no one, of course, thought in 1932 that with these small we will have to go into battle with training tanks ... "However, the Pz-I also had quite tangible advantages. Here is how Guderian describes the advantages that his first tanks

had compared to the plywood and cardboard mock-ups that were used before in the Reichswehr exercises: "... schoolchildren who had previously *pierced our mock-ups with their pencils to look inside were amazed by the new armored vehicles ...*" [65].

That's it. The Nazis did not know that not a schoolboy was waiting for them ahead with a pencil, and the Red Army soldier Sereda with an axe.

"The brave man crept up the ditch from the rear, quickly climbed onto the tank and, with blows from a sapper's ax, disabled the machine gun and the crew of the enemy tank." This is not the leading newspaper Pravda. These are lines from the memoirs of General of the Army D.D. Lelyushenko [22]. The illustrious commander of the Great Patriotic War, who graduated from it in Prague as commander of the 4th Guards Tank Army, he saw German tanks not in pictures. And the Komsomol member Ivan Pavlovich Sereda is not a fictional person, but a real participant in the war, awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and a monument in his homeland, in the village of Galitsinovka, for his feat. Let's continue, however, reading Guderian's memoirs: *"... in view of the fact that*

the production of the main types of tanks dragged on for more time than we expected, General Lutz decided to build another intermediate type of tank, armed with a 20-mm automatic cannon and one machine gun. ..."

What can these German wedges be compared to? In the absence of anything worse in service with the Red Army than the obsolete and already discontinued by the beginning of the war, the T-26 tank, we will compare it with the German Pz-II [hereinafter, materials published in 1, 3, 93, 94, 95 are used, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 167].

	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб / борт	Скорость, км / час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Дистанция поражения
Pz-II	9,50	140	30 / 20	40	190	20	500
T-26	9,75	90	15 / 10	35	170	45	1200

By and large, both of them, as they say, "worth each other." Low-powered engines, short range, bulletproof armor - typical light tanks of the early 30s.

Although the thickness of the frontal armor of the Pz-II was twice that of the T-26, it still did not turn into a tank with anti-cannon armor. This circumstance is clearly reflected in the figure in the last column of the table. The 20K 45 mm

cannon mounted on the T-26 confidently penetrated such armor at a distance of 1200 m, while the German 20 mm K⁴K 30 cannon projectile retained the necessary speed and armor penetration only at a distance of 300-500 m. This combination of weapon parameters and armor protection allowed the Soviet tank, with tactically competent use of it, to shoot Rg II with virtually impunity.

At least, this is how General Pavlov described in his report at the December (1940) Meeting of the highest command staff the **practical experience** of fighting German tanks: "... the

experience of the war in Spain taught the Germans and showed them what tanks are needed, for light German tanks in the fight against republican cannon tanks (i.e. our T-26, and then BT-5) were not included in any comparison and were shot mercilessly ... "[14].

It is also worth noting that in terms of ballistic characteristics, the "gun" of the German Pz-II is slightly inferior to the parameters of the Soviet anti-tank 14.5 mm Dyagterev gun. So the most accurate name for the Pz-II would be "self-propelled anti-tank rifle with a machine gun." This combat vehicle could be (and was in fact) successfully used for reconnaissance, to fight enemy light tanks and armored vehicles. To perform the main tasks of the tank - the destruction of enemy firepower and manpower - the projectile of the 20-mm gun mounted on the Pz-II was completely unsuitable, so classifying the Pz-II as a "tank" is a big exaggeration. Now it remains only to estimate the quantity. Against **219** "tankettes"

of the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht, only as part of the troops of the Kiev (excluding Odessa) military district on June 1, 1941, there were **1962 T-26 tanks** (hereinafter, the number of tanks in the Kiev OBO is indicated according to the report of the head of the Armored

Yu-3 control. f. Major General Morgunov dated July 17, 1941) [29, p. 103]. The ratio of the number in this class of tanks is **1 to 9**.

In addition, there were 651 T-37/T-38/T-40 amphibious tanks in the area. Sometimes in military history literature they are put on the same level as the German Pz-I. In our opinion, such a comparison is completely inappropriate. The absence of artillery weapons on a reconnaissance tracked amphibian is understandable and justified. There is no need to rumble a cannon in reconnaissance, but the ability to cross rivers and lakes, "not knowing the ford", made the T37 / 38 a unique combat vehicle. Nobody planned to use the T-37 / T-38 as a line tank, and these amphibians, as a rule, were in service with the reconnaissance units of rifle and tank divisions.

Now let's move on to the second category, to "good lungs tanks."

In the tank units of the Wehrmacht, the **Pz-III** tank of **the D, E, F** series, armed with a 37-mm cannon, undoubtedly deserved this name. The 1st tank group of such tanks had exactly **100 units**.

Developed in 1936 by Daimler-Benz, the combat vehicle was really good. The amenities created by the designers for the work of the crew could be considered a role model. Not a single Soviet, English or American tank of that time had them. The crew of five included a commander "released" from the duties of a gunner, who had at his disposal a special commander's cupola with all-round optical instruments. And yet, not the convenience of driving is the main advantage of the tank. As it was absolutely accurately indicated in the popularly beloved song ("The armor is strong, and our tanks are fast, and the enemy knows about the strength of their fire ..."), a tank is **armor, mobility, weapons**. In two of these parameters, our good light tank BT-7 was superior to the "troika".

	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб / борт	Скорость, км / час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Дистанция поражения, м
Pz-III E	19,5	300	30/30	40	165	37	700
BT-7	13,8	450	22/10	52/72	230/500	45	1200

Despite the thicker armor, the German tank was inferior to its opponent in terms of the ratio of armament and body armor parameters. Our BT could hit the Pz-III at a kilometer range, while remaining relatively safe. Just as in the case of the Pz-II, the choice of 30-mm frontal armor on the Pz-III was an undoubted mistake: it was too little to provide anti-ballistic protection, and too much to protect against enemy infantry small arms bullets. Well, in terms of all indicators of mobility, the wheeled-

tracked BT-7 was simply the best tank in the world. Even on tracks, it developed an incredible speed for tanks of that era of 52 km / h and had a cruising range at one gas station one and a half times greater than the Pz-III. Even off-road, the BT went at a speed of 35 km / h, unattainable for tanks of that era, i.e. almost 10 meters per second. But this is not the limit. In 1940, the BT-7M was put into mass production. This tank was equipped with a 500 hp diesel engine. Along with the well-known advantages of a diesel tank (diesel oil does not explode, and it is not so easy to light it), the installation of a more powerful and economical engine made it possible to increase the maximum speed on the tracks to 62 km / h, and the cruising range - up to 400 km! Having dropped the tracks, on a good road, the BT-7M could accelerate to 86 km / h, and the range on wheels was expressed by a fantastic figure of 900 km.

As of June 1, 1941, there were **201** such tanks (BT-7M) in the Kiev District troops out of a total of **1486 BT-7 tanks**. Another **169 BT-7M tanks** were part of the neighboring Odessa district, and, given the mobility of this tank, a quick redeployment of 470 km from Chisinau to Lvov could not be considered something impossible.

So, in the "good light tank" category, Soviet troops in the southern theater of operations had **a huge quantitative advantage with some qualitative superiority**.

Now about what we called "fire support tanks". As we noted above, for a tank formation, combat with its own kind is not the only, and not even the most important type of combat work, but rather a "necessary evil." Accordingly, in the practice of designing tanks, attempts were made to separate the two main tasks of the tank (fighting enemy tanks and fire support of their own infantry) and create a specialized fighter tank and a fire support tank - just as in the aviation of that era there was a clear division into a bomber aircraft (the task of which is the destruction of enemy ground forces) and a fighter aircraft (whose task is to destroy enemy aircraft). So, for example, on the basis of the T-34 tank, it was supposed (Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No.

1216-506 / ss of May 5, 1941) to create a tank fighter armed with a long-barreled 57-mm cannon capable of penetrating 80 mm armor at a distance of 1 km. The mass production of this "fighter" was quickly curtailed, because during the hostilities it turned out that the Wehrmacht simply did not have tanks with such armor in service (however, several dozen T-34/57s took part in the battle for Moscow). But the "fire support tanks" for a long time were mass-produced both here and in Germany.

A

characteristic distinguishing feature of this class of tanks were short-barreled three-inch guns. The initial velocity of the projectile and, consequently, the armor penetration of these guns were very low (the 45-mm Soviet 20K tank gun surpassed the 75-mm German KwK-37 gun at all ranges in armor penetration!), but on the infantry

the enemy was hit by a "full-weight" three-inch high-explosive fragmentation

projectile. The 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht had **100** Pz-IV fire support tanks - twenty tanks in each division. And the troops of the Kiev OVO were armed with **195** three-tower **T-28** tanks and **48** five-tower giants **T-35**. Total **243 tanks**.

Despite the same functional purpose, outwardly they were very different combat vehicles.

	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб/борт	Скорость, км / час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Габариты, м
Pz-IV	22	300	60/30	40	200	75	5,9 * 2,9 * 2,7
T-28	27,8	450	30/20	40	220	76	7,4 * 2,8 * 2,8

The Soviet three-turreted T-28 tank was significantly heavier and as much as 1.5 meters longer. All this made him very clumsy on the battlefield compared to the German Pz-IV. At the same time, our T-28 (due to the presence of two separate machine gun turrets) was much better armed to fight the enemy infantry. In addition, some of the latest T-28s were armed with a long-barreled 76-mm cannon, which "transferred" it to the category of full-fledged medium tanks. Not everything is simple with

armor protection. At first glance, the German Pz-IV has much thicker armor. Upon closer analysis, it turns out that the "fours" of the A, B, C, D, E series, produced from 1938 to the beginning of 1941, had typical bulletproof armor: forehead

- 30 mm, board - 20 mm. In the future, the frontal armor of the hull was reinforced with a 30-mm armor plate (the "four" tower still had only bulletproof armor!). But our T-28s, after the bloody experience of the Finnish war, were shielded with additional frontal armor (up to 60 or even up to 80 mm) and were in no way inferior to the Pz-IV in this respect. The

wide tracks of the Soviet tank provided him with better maneuverability. The ground pressure of the 28-ton T-28 was significantly less (0.72 vs. 1.03 kg/cm²) than that of the lighter German Pz-IV. In general,

in terms of the entire set of tactical and technical characteristics, these tanks are approximately equivalent. But Soviet historians stubbornly called the Pz-IV a "heavy tank", and the presence of hundreds of T-28 tanks in service with the Red Army was simply not noticed. But in vain. In capable hands, it was a very "noticeable" combat vehicle. Army General D.D. Lelyushenko in October 1941 took command of the 5th Army, which entered into battle with German tank divisions on the legendary Borodino field near Moscow. In his memoirs, he, as a great success,

recalls: *"... He sent Major A. Efimov for reconnaissance. An hour and a half later, he happily reported - there are 16 T-28 tanks without engines, but with serviceable guns ... For us, this was just a godsend. Of course, it is necessary to use these tanks as fixed firing points, bury them in the ground and place them in the direction of Borodino - Mozhaisk, where the enemy will deliver the main tank attack ... "*

The decision turned out to be correct.

Lelyushenko writes: *"... the fourth tank is already being fired at close range from a T-28 by Sergeant Serebryakov ... The enemy tried to enter the Mozhaisk area, but was met by direct fire from our dug-in T-28 tanks. Having lost a lot of equipment, the enemy stopped for a short time..."* [22]

We had such a story: 16 T-28 hulls without motors are "just a godsend", and 292 serviceable T-28 tanks (with motors, of course) that were in service with the Red Army in the summer of 1941 are a "trifle", not even worth mentioning...

Is it any wonder after that that about 48 five-tower T-35s, which were in service with the 67th and 68th tank regiments of the 34th tank division of the 8th mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, our

"Historians" did not even remember. How important is fifty steel giants, surpassing in the total number of tank guns (48 three-inch guns and 96 barrels of 45-mm 20K guns) any of the tank divisions of the 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht! There is no doubt that in all indicators of mobility this "land battleship" was inferior to any motorcycle (later we will see how the command of the Southwestern Front drove the 8th mechanized corps, including its heavy tanks, in zigzags hundreds of kilometers). But is the heavy tank to blame for the fact that they tried to use it SO? But even being simply buried in the ground, 48 five-tower tanks could form a defensive knot in a matter of hours, almost insurmountable for enemy infantry and light tanks.

And, finally, the best thing that was in service with the Wehrmacht tank divisions in the summer of 1941: good medium tanks Pz-III of the H and J series.

"The best" is not the opinion of an amateur author, but the conclusion of an authoritative state commission

(consisting of 48 people - engineers, intelligence officers, designers, which, under the leadership of People's Commissar Tevo-syan, traveled three times in 1939-1940, climbed around and, I'm sorry, sniffed at the German tank factories and from everything she saw, she selected **only the Pz-III tank for purchase**. And this is not because Comrade Stalin spared money. Stalin did not spare money for a good deed - to buy or steal Western military technology. In the same Germany, under the guise of a friendship agreement, were purchased: Messerschmitt-109 - five pieces,

Messerschmitt-110 - six pieces, two Junkers-88, Dornier-215, one newest experimental two "Messerschmitt-209" (the Germans probably simply didn't have a second copy, otherwise they would have taken it), a battery of 105-mm anti-aircraft guns, heavy 210-mm howitzers, drawings of the newest, largest in the world battleship Bismarck, special, not rusting in the sea 88mm cannons for submarines, six periscopes, sonar equipment, optical rangefinders for naval artillery, 330mm ship gun mounts, tank radios, sights for dive bombing, 4 sets of instruments for ballistic testing of artillery systems, etc. , And. etc.

And only one single tank of one type. All other models of German tanks, allegedly "undoubtedly having a qualitative superiority over our tanks," were simply not interested in Soviet reconnaissance engineers. The "best" Pz-III of the H and J series

became due to two circumstances: the new 50-mm KwK-38 cannon and the frontal armor of the hull with a thickness of 50 mm. Initially, the H series went into production with the usual 30 mm frontal armor for German tanks, but then an additional 30 mm sheet was welded onto it in front, so in place of this "blotch" the armor protection of the tank reached 60 mm. And this means that the Pz-III armored in this way turned into a tank with anti-ballistic armor: our 45-mm anti-tank (tank) gun, if it could penetrate such armor, then only at an extremely short distance of 100 m, which is not always possible in battle and always deadly.

However, let's not forget that a tank on the battlefield is not a tram on rails. When moving over rough terrain, it was difficult for the "troika" not to expose its tall side and turret to fire, protected by 30-mm armor, which (we repeat this again) all our light tanks and even cannon armored vehicles pierced a 45-mm cannon projectile at a kilometer range. So the statement about the anti-shell armor of the Pz-III of the H and J series is quite stretched.

There can't be too many of the best. A-priori. As mentioned above, there were no tanks of this type in the 3rd Tank Group of the Wehrmacht at all. In Western Ukraine, the 1st Tank Group of Pz-III tanks of the H and J series **could have 255 units**. Such an indefinite wording - "could be" - is due to the fact that the sources known to the author indicate only the number of "triples" armed with a new 50-mm cannon. There were 255 such tanks in the 1st Panzer Group. But the Pz-III tanks of the early series (E, F, G) with 20-30 mm bulletproof armor were re-equipped with this gun. Therefore, assuming that all 255 Pz-IIIs with a 50-mm cannon had anti-projectile frontal armor, we greatly overestimate the quality level of the German tank divisions operating in the southern theater of operations.

In the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, **496 T-34 tanks** should be classified as **good medium tanks**. Another 50 thirty-fours

was in the 2MK of the Southern Front near Chisinau. As you can see, there were few of the best in the Red Army. Only **twice as many** as the Germans. But even this is a lot, if we take into account the absolute superiority in tactical and technical characteristics.

	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб/бог	Скорость, км/час	Запас хода, км
Pz-III J	21,6	300	50/30	40	145
T-34	28,5	500, дизель	45/40	50	300

Decisively in all the main indicators - mobility, armor protection, weapons - the T-34 surpassed the best in June 1941, the German Pz-III tank of the J series.

The long-barreled 76-mm F-34 cannon pierced the frontal armor of the best German tanks (Pz-III series J, Pz-IV series F) at a distance of 1000-1200 meters. While NOT ONE Wehrmacht tank could hit the "thirty-four" even from 500 meters. Only when firing at extremely short distances (100-300 meters) could the German 50-mm KwK-38 tank gun theoretically penetrate the side armor of the T-34. Thanks to the wide

(550 mm) tracks of the T-34, although it weighed 6-7 tons more than the heaviest German tanks, it created a ground pressure of only 0.72 kg / cm² (against 0.9-1.0 kg / cm² from the German Pz-III). Hence - and a higher cross-country ability, mud and snow. And, finally, the main "secret" of the

T-34: a compact and very powerful diesel engine (Germany both started and ended the war on "flammable" tanks with gasoline engines). But a diesel engine is not only relative fire safety. This is also a low fuel consumption, which allowed the "thirty-four"

travel more than 300 kilometers at one gas station, which corresponded to the distance from Lviv to Radom or Krakow. And in addition to all this, a very heavy (by German standards) machine developed a speed greater than the lightest and fastest German Pz-II. All these arguments are by no means abstract

theorizing. In the memoirs of German "practitioners" (generals Guderian, Blumentritt, Goth, Schneider) it is easy to find a lot of evidence of the shock that the Wehrmacht experienced when they met the new

Soviet tank:

"... in 1941, these tanks were the most powerful of all that existed ... T-34 tanks, as if nothing had happened, passed through the battle formations of the 7th Infantry Division, reached the artillery positions and literally crushed the guns located there .. Our anti-tank guns turned out to be powerless against the Russian T-34 tanks ... it came to panic ... " This is a memoir, so to speak, fiction. And here is a serious

document: "Instructions for all parts of the Eastern Front on the fight of our tanks with the Russian T-34." Issued on May 26, 1942 by the command of the mobile troops (Schnellen Truppen) of the Wehrmacht. This is what pleased the command of their soldiers:

"... T-34 is faster, more maneuverable, has better off-road capability than our Pz-III and Pz-IV. His armor is stronger. The penetrating power of its 7.62 cm gun is superior to our 5 and 7.5 cm guns. The successful location of the inclined armor plates increases the likelihood of ricochet ... Fighting the T-34 with our 5 cm KwK 38 cannon is possible only at short distances by shooting at the side or stern of the tank ... it is necessary to shoot so that the projectile is perpendicular to the surface of the armor ... " [87]. Excellent instruction.

Completely accurate and true. Alas, in this

instruction (despite the vaunted German punctuality) there are no instructions on how to bring the gun barrel of a German tank into such a position? If there is no heavy cargo helicopter at hand, then there is only one way left: to climb a steep hill (with a slope angle of at least 40 degrees) and ask the crew of a Soviet tank to drive closer and turn around...

Only the crew of the German Pz III had a real chance in the fight against the T-34, in the ammunition load of which there were special sub-caliber armor-piercing shells. Such a projectile had a rather complex design, consisting of an armor-piercing core and a shell (the so-called "pallet"). When the projectile hit the target, the pallet made of mild steel was crushed, and the hard, sharp-headed core made of tungsten carbide pierced the armor. The sub-caliber projectile had a significantly lower weight (compared to a conventional armor-piercing projectile) and, as a result, a significantly higher initial speed and armor penetration. So, the 50-mm KwK 38 tank gun pierced 96 mm armor at a distance of 100 meters and 58 mm at a distance of 500 meters with a PzGr-40 sub-caliber projectile. Even the miserable 20-mm cannon of the light German Pz-II tank from a distance of 100 m pierced 49 mm of armor with a sub-caliber projectile. However, "there

are spots on the Sun." Just as the T-34 tank was not a "miracle weapon," the sub-caliber projectile did not solve all the problems of anti-tank defense, and it was by no means accidental that it was withdrawn from

service by the end of the war. The first and most important drawback of sub-caliber shells was their absence. Tungsten carbide is an expensive exotic, and Germany could not scatter (in the truest sense of the word) the most scarce alloying element (tungsten) necessary for the production of special steels during a protracted war. The volume of production of "tungsten" shells amounted to tens, then - a few percent of the total production of anti-tank ammunition, and at the beginning of 1944 it was completely stopped. Secondly, the speed, and hence the

armor penetration of small-weight and caliber projectiles, rapidly decreases with distance. In aerodynamics, this is called the "cube-square law" (aerodynamic drag depends on the square of the linear cube, so a light projectile is small, and the inertia force of _ caliber projectile of a larger caliber). loses its initial speed faster than a heavy. With regard to the sub-caliber projectile, the effect of this law was significantly aggravated by the large aerodynamic drag of the "pallet". In fact, firing a sub-caliber projectile was effective only at small and medium

distances (no more than 500 meters); at a distance of 1000 meters, armor penetration dropped to almost zero.

Thirdly, a tank is not a balloon, which is enough to pierce with a needle. In the fight against a tank, it is not the fact of the appearance of a through hole in the armor that is important, but what is called "armor impact". Standard, "ordinary" armor-piercing shells had a bursting charge (120-155 g of explosive in the BR-350 projectile for a Soviet 76-mm tank gun), which hit the tank crew with shrapnel and an explosive wave and ignited gasoline vapors. A sub-caliber projectile, in principle, could not carry an explosive charge, and the mass of the tungsten-carbide core was relatively small in order to create a powerful jet of hot micro-fragments of pierced armor. He could cause serious damage to the tank only in the event of a direct hit on some particularly vulnerable unit.

To these common shortcomings (you can call them the word "features") of sub-caliber shells in the case of firing at the T-34 tank, another one was added: a tendency to ricochet or "roll over" characteristic of all pointed shells of small diameter and large elongation, followed by the destruction of the projectile upon meeting with armor at angles of more than 30-40 degrees. The large angle of inclination of the armor plates of the T-34 hull (40 degrees on the sides, 60 degrees on the frontal hull plate) made the T-34 the most "unsuitable" target for firing a sub-caliber projectile. Finally, by definition, there could be no gasoline vapor in a tank with a diesel engine, so it was especially difficult to ignite the "thirty-four" with a projectile that did not have a bursting charge.

Having developed a tank with such phenomenal (for the early 40s) characteristics that the new Soviet medium tank T-34 possessed, it would be easy to fall into "dizziness with success." But it was not in vain that Comrade Stalin warned the graduates of his military academies as early as May 5, 1941: *"... states perish if they turn a blind eye to shortcomings, get carried away by their successes, rest on*

their laurels ..." [6, p. 650]. Therefore, by no means calming down on the production of the T-34, on the same day, December 19, 1939, the same

By Decree No. 443 / ss , **the KV heavy tank** was adopted by the Red Army . If the T-34

can still be compared, albeit at a very big stretch, with the best German Pz-III series 3 tank at the start of the Soviet-German war, then the monstrous 48-ton KV monster was generally incomparable with any German tank. Frontal armor of 95 mm and side armor of 75 mm made it invulnerable to any German tank gun. The forced diesel V-2k developed a power of 600 hp, which allowed the steel giant to move along the highway at a speed only slightly inferior to the speed of light German tanks (35 km / h). The same as on the T-34, the 76-mm gun designed by Grabin F-34 could in the summer of 1941 shoot any German tanks, at any distance, from any angle, as a training target. Incredibly, even in terms of cross-country ability, a heavy Soviet tank (with a specific pressure on the ground of only 0.77 kg / cm²) was superior to its opponents. A third of all KV tanks produced by the

beginning of July 1941 (213 out of 636) were armed with a 152 mm howitzer (this variant was called the KV-2). It is noteworthy that, judging by the military diary of F. Halder, the German generals did not even believe in the possibility of the existence of a tank with such weapons. But the German soldiers any doubts disappeared very quickly. *"When our tanks, especially KV tanks, appear, the infantry flees, and the tanks don't accept battle ... KV tanks confuse the enemy, and in all cases his tanks retreated"* - these are the lines from the report on the hostilities of the 10th tank divisions of the 15th MK in June 1941

Of course, there were shortcomings (and very serious ones) in the KV tank. The main problem of the 48-ton giant was a weak and unreliable transmission. Only after the KV-1S modification with a new gearbox and a weight reduced to 42.5 tons was put into production at the end of 1942, this tank got a "second wind".

"So that's why the Germans reached Moscow! — exclaims the perceptive reader. "The transmission on the HF was bad!" Let's not jump to conclusions. For this, in addition to tanks, tank units also have commanders, so that each vehicle is used taking into account both its strengths and weaknesses. Of course, a heavy tank could not withstand such "circular races" that the command of the Southwestern Front arranged for its mechanized corps (later we will

Let's talk about this in more detail). Where the KV was used wisely and for its intended purpose, it revealed its enormous combat capabilities. A lot has been written about the phenomenal achievements of HF. Here we will confine ourselves to only mentioning two episodes from his glorious combat biography.

The former commander of the 41st tank corps of the Wehrmacht, General Reinhardt,

writes: *"... from three sides we fired at the Russian iron monsters, but everything was in vain. The Russians, on the other hand, fired effectively. After a long fight, we had to retreat to avoid a complete rout. The Russian giants were coming closer and closer. One of them approached our tank, which was hopelessly bogged down in a swampy pond (a light German tank got stuck, and a heavy KV approached! - M.S.). Without any hesitation, the black monster drove over the tank and pressed its tracks into the mud. At that moment, a 150-mm howitzer arrived... The gunners opened fire on the tank with direct fire and achieved a hit - it was like lightning struck. The tank stopped ... Suddenly, someone from the crew of the gun yelled heart-rendingly: "He went again!" Indeed, the tank came to life and began to approach the gun. Another minute, and the caterpillars of the tank, shining with metal, like a toy, pressed the howitzer into the ground ... "*

On August 19, 1941, the crew of the KV tank No. 864 under the command of Senior Lieutenant Zinovy Kolobanov from the 1st Tank Battalion of the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division of the 1st Mechanized Corps (Leningrad Military District) hid in an ambush on the road from Luga to Gatchina. There, a meeting of a single KV with a column of forty German tanks took place. When this unprecedented battle ended, 22 German tanks were smoking in the field, and our KV, having received 156 direct hits from enemy shells, returned to the location of its

division. Of course, the outstanding achievements of the best of the best will never become the average norm. That is why the author does not at all call for multiplying the number of heavy KV tanks that were in service with the troops of the Southwestern Front (and there were **265 units there**) by 22 and comparing the resulting number with the total number of tanks in the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht. That doesn't happen in war. And there weren't such a number (6116) of serviceable tanks in all pa

Brest in Normandy to Brest in Belarus. Therefore, summing up this chapter, we confine ourselves to a simple and fairly reasonable conclusion: the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front had **a multiple numerical superiority** in tanks over the 1st Wehrmacht Panzer Group, **with absolute superiority in the quality of** armored vehicles. With the minimally reasonable management of this gigantic tank horde, the oncoming tank battle in Western Ukraine should have ended with only one result - the mechanized corps of the Red Army should have simply crushed and smeared the Kleist tank group along the wall. Like a cockroach.

That's pretty

much how it all happened. Just the opposite.

RESULTS

Two weeks have passed since the beginning of the war. The tank battle in the "triangle" Lutsk - Brody - Rivne died down. The repeated counterattack of the mechanized corps of the 5th Army also ended. The troops of the German Army Group "South" broke into the operational depth of the defense of the Southwestern Front and rapidly approached the so-called "Stalin Line" (fortified areas on the old Soviet-Polish border). By the evening of July 8, the Novograd-Volynsky fortified area was broken through on most of its front, the 3rd tank corps of the Wehrmacht rushed to Zhitomir, and the 48th tank corps captured Berdichev on the morning of July 8, thus frustrating all the plans of the Soviet command for a systematic withdrawal of the defeated divisions Yu-3. f. beyond the line of the old state border.

In this situation, on July 7, 1941, the following document was drawn up: "Report of the Commander of the Southwestern Front to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army on the situation of the mechanized corps of the front" [29, pp. 82-83]. The document is

small. We will present it almost in full. For the convenience of the reader, next to each geographical name, the distance from the western border will be indicated, and next to the numbers of the remainder of the armored vehicles in the mechanized corps, the percentage of losses (in relation to the number at the beginning of the war) will be indicated. In addition, the mechanized corps will be listed in the order that was adopted by us in the second chapter, i.e. first mechanized corps of the first echelon from north to south, then two mechanized corps of the reserve of the South-Western F

Data on the 16th MK and the 24th MK, which did not take part in the tank battle, will be skipped. So: "Owls.

secret

to the Chief of

the General Staff of the Red Army

I am reporting on the state of the mechanized corps: the 22nd mechanized corps is concentrated in the Korosten area (320 km), with 340 combat vehicles. (52%)

The 15th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Berezovka area (300 km), having 66 combat vehicles. (91%) The 4th

mechanized corps is concentrated in the Ivnitsa area (360 km), having 126 combat vehicles in its composition. (87%)

8th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Ka-zatin area (380 km), having 43 combat vehicles. (95%)

The 9th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Korosten area (320 km), having 164 combat vehicles. (48%)

The 19th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Korchevka area (270 km), having 66 combat vehicles. (85%) In personnel

for the period of fighting from 22.6.41, all corps have losses of about 25-30%. Military

advice

The South-Western Front considers it expedient ... to withdraw the directorates of mechanized corps and tank divisions, corps and divisional units, as well as tank regiments of tank divisions and all rear facilities to the areas of Nizhyn, Priluki, Pyryatin, Yagotin ... "(this is already beyond the Dnieper , 250 km east of those areas in which the remnants of the mechanized corps were on July 7. - M.S.).

Signatures: Kirponos, Purkaev,

Khrushchev. First off, a little clarification. At first glance, it may seem that the situation in the 9th MK and 22nd MK was much better than the average. They seemed to have lost "only" half of their military equipment.

Alas, these figures reflect only the absence of the Yu-3 command. f (which already on July 6 moved beyond the Dnieper, to Brovary near Kiev) of reliable information about the state of the units entrusted to them. Already eight days later, on July 15, 1941, in the report of the head of the Yu-3 Armored Directorate. f. "On the condition and availability of the material part of the mechanized corps of the front" it was reported that the 22nd MK has only 30 tanks (instead of 340), and the 9th MK has 32 tanks (instead of 164) [29, p. 101]. Considering that during this week the mechanized corps were practically withdrawn from the combat zone beyond the Dnieper, such a "downsizing" was most likely due not to combat losses, but simply to receiving more reliable reports.

Comments on these reports are almost superfluous. This is destruction. Unheard of, unparalleled destruction. In just two weeks, the Southwestern Front lost **more than four thousand tanks** (more than the total number of Wehrmacht tanks **on the entire Eastern Front**). There is no war

without losses. But what is **the result of the counterattack** of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, for which they paid with the loss of 90% of their tank fleet? The authors of the infamous 12-volume "History of the Second World War" tell gullible readers that *"the advance of the Nazis in the direction of the main attack of Army Group South was slowed down ... their main forces were drawn into protracted battles ..."*.

Again and again we repeat the same question - compared to what? In

May 1940, having concentrated the most powerful armored fist (nine tank divisions, 2574 tanks) on the 150-km section from Liege to Saarbrücken, the Germans broke through the defenses of the French and Belgian armies and in two weeks, from May 10 to 24, reached La Manchu, having overcome 300-350 km. The average advance rate is 26 km per day. This Soviet historians liked to call and now still call it "the triumphal march of the Wehrmacht in Western Europe." Why should the breakthrough of the 1st Panzer Group 300-350 km deep into Western Ukraine in the same two weeks in the summer of 1941 be called "protracted battles"?

According to the pre-war plans of the Soviet command, the troops of the Southwestern Front on the 10-12th day of the offensive were to reach the line of the Vistula and Dunaets rivers, which corresponds to an average offensive rate of 10-12 km per day. These are plans. But in reality, the supposedly "slowed down" offensive of the German Army Group "South" into the depths of Ukraine went at a pace of 20-25 km per day. And why shouldn't the Soviet "historians" remember how many days (or months) it took to liberate the western regions of Ukraine in

1944? Already on July 15, 1941, signed by Zhukov, the Headquarters Directive on the disbandment of the mechanized corps was issued. Their short history ended there. And what about the enemy? Perhaps, after these "protracted battles", only numbers remained of his tank divisions? No, the history of the 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht was just beginning. Having broken through the line of fortified areas on the old border and went

Belaya Tserkov, the German tank divisions turned 90 degrees and rushed to the south of Ukraine, to the rear of the randomly retreating troops of the 6th and 12th armies of the Southwestern Front. In order to "strengthen the leadership", the Headquarters decided on July 25 to transfer these two armies to the Southern Front. While the big bosses were figuring out who was responsible for what, in the first days of August both armies (more precisely, their remnants) were surrounded in the Uman region and surrendered. About a hundred thousand people were captured, including Major General Ponedelin, commander of the 12th Army, and Lieutenant General

Muzychenko, commander of the 6th Army. After another month of fighting (by September 4, 1941), the irretrievable losses of the 1st tank group (1st TGr) of the Wehrmacht amounted to **186 tanks**, i.e. ONE TWENTIETH of the losses of the Southwestern Front in the first two weeks of the war. In addition, hundreds of tanks were knocked out and temporarily disabled, so that the total number of combat-ready tanks in the 1st TGr

was halved to 391 units [10, p. 206]. In this composition (in terms of the number of combat-ready tanks approximately corresponding to one tank division of the Red Army), the "steel avalanche" of the 1st TGr crossed the Dnieper in the Kremenchug region (practically without a fight, simply moving across the mighty river along 1.5-km pontoon bridges) and 12 September 1941 rushed to the north, towards the 2nd Panzer Group advancing across the Desna River. On September 15, they joined in the Lubna-Lokhvitsa area (170 km east of Kyiv), thus surrounding the 21st, 5th, 37th, 26th and 38th armies. According to the reports of the Wehrmacht command, more than 600 thousand people fell into German captivity in the giant Kiev "sack". On September 20, near the village of Shumeikovo near the town of Lokhvitsa, the commander of the Southwestern Front, Colonel General M.P., was killed.

Kirponos, chief of staff of the front, Major General V.A. Tupikov and member of the Military

Not stopping there, the Kleist tank group turned around again, this time 180 degrees, and on September 24, almost without an operational pause, launched an offensive south to the Sea of Azov. Having advanced 450 km in 15 days, the Germans surrounded and captured another 100 thousand people in the Melitopol region, then, turning 90 degrees, went another 300 km to the east and by November 21, 1941 occupied Taganrog and Rostov-on-Don. Total: more than one and a half thousand kilometers of travel (not counting the inevitable during the fighting

maneuvering actions), along the "anti-tank" Soviet roads, on tanks with narrow tracks and low-power gasoline engines. Do you need any other evidence that the counterattack of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front in June 1941 not only did not lead to the defeat, but did not even have any noticeable effect on the combat effectiveness of the Kleist tank group?

And yet, in one respect, the situation on the Southwestern Front was qualitatively different from that which had developed in the first weeks of the war on the Western Front. In Belarus, the Germans, advancing with two tank groups from Brest and Vilnius to Minsk, were able to surround most of the Red Army forces. The defeat of the troops on the battlefield was supplemented by the pogrom carried out by Stalin among the command of the Western Front. As a result, there are almost no staff documents or well-informed witnesses left, and the historian has to reconstruct the picture of events in much the same way as paleobiologists reconstruct the skeleton of a dinosaur from a pair of

fossilized bones. But in Ukraine, events developed differently. On the entire southern theater of operations from Polesie to the Black Sea, the Wehrmacht command had only one tank group at its disposal, and the Germans failed to carry out a major operation to encircle the Soviet troops in the first days of the war. Even the Soviet divisions, which had lost almost all military equipment, were able to retreat to the east, retaining their command, battle flags and documents. Yes, and Stalin's reaction to the failure of the counteroffensive of the Southwestern Front was incomprehensibly soft. All commanders of Yu-3 mechanized corps. f., who were destined to stay alive, went on promotion. The commander of the 9th MK Rokossovsky stepped above all, ending the war as a front commander, with the rank of marshal and with two Gold Stars of the Hero of the Soviet Union. A great future, most likely, awaited the commander of the 4th MK Vlasov. After the disbandment of the mechanized corps, Vlasov was appointed commander of the most powerful on Yu-3. f. 37th army; after the defeat of this army in the Kiev "sack", he successfully commands the 20th army in the battle for Moscow, then Stalin hands him the 2nd shock army - and here the brilliant career e

straight to the gallows, on which this most famous traitor ended his days. The

commander of the 8th mechanized corps Ryabyshev soared rapidly up the ranks. After the corps was disbanded, he commanded the 38th Army, and from August 30, 1941, the entire Southern Front! The vacated post of commander of the 38th Army was taken by another former commander of the mechanized corps - N.V. Feklenko (19th MK). The commander of the 1st artillery anti-tank brigade (PTAB) of the Southwestern Front, K.S., also rose to the rank of marshal. Moskalenko, and head of the operational department of the Yu-3 headquarters. f. THEIR. Bagramyan, and the commander of the 20th Panzer Division (9th MK) M.E. Katukov. As a result, there is no shortage of memoirs and scientific-historical literature describing the June battles in Western Ukraine. Many valuable documents also survived, including reports from the commanders of tank divisions of the 4th, 15th, 19th and 22nd mechanized corps

In a word - there is something to work with. But before we begin a detailed analysis of the real events of this, the second in our presentation and the most powerful in reality, "Stalin's blow", we will deal with what actually did not happen. Just so that we do not have to return to the discussion of these myths.

ABOUT WHAT WAS NOT

As you may have guessed, dear reader, we will again talk about the mighty German aviation, the crushing "first disarming strike" and other miracles. In part 1, we tried, but did

not find any confirmation of the terrible stories about how *"during a sudden blow, Soviet tankers were shot even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured without crews ..."*. Nothing like this was seen on the Western Front. But, perhaps, V. Suvorov had in mind the beginning of hostilities in Western Ukraine? Maybe it was in the zone of the Southwestern Front that *"Soviet reconnaissance planes could not take to the skies ... Our Cyclops had his eye gouged out. Our cyclops is blind. He swings his steel fists and roars in impotent rage..."*

And who knocked out the eye of the "Cyclops"? Yes, and what? The 5th Luftwaffe Aviation Corps, operating jointly with Army Group South over Ukraine, had seven bomber and five fighter air groups. On the morning of June 22, 1941, they included **247** horizontal bombers (163 Ju-88s and 103 He-111s) and 109 Messerschmitt-109 **fighters** [24]. There was not a single Ju-87 dive bomber (this symbol of the "blitzkrieg", beloved by all filmmakers), not a single Me-110 fighter-bomber over the Southwestern Front. From this, in particular, it follows that the capabilities of the 5th Luftwaffe Air Corps for bombing mobile point targets (which are tanks and armored vehicles) were close to zero.

German aviation was opposed by the Air Force of the Southwestern Front and two (2nd and 4th) long-range bomber air corps, numbering at least **1180 bombers** (excluding outdated heavy TB-3) and **1174 fighters** (including **222 of the latest** MiG-3 and Yak-1) [23, 190]. That is, even in terms of the number of "new types" fighters, the Soviet Air Force had a one and a half times superiority in numbers over the enemy! The Germans could not overcome such a huge numerical superiority on the move. No matter how hard we tried and no matter how I helped th

this is the chaos into which the entire command and control system of the Southwestern Front plunged. As a result, the command of the 5th AK, which had to attack with very frail forces more than **216 airfields**, which had Yu-3 aviation west of the Dnieper. front [16, p. 492]. there was simply no strength and means to also chase thousands of Soviet tanks, armored vehicles, tractors and guns. As a result, the deployment of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front and their advance to the initial areas for the offensive occurred almost without interference from German aviation. From north to south, from Polissya to

the Carpathians, the real picture of events was as follows [29, 61, 92]: - **22nd MK**. The

corps headquarters, the 19th Panzer and 215th Motorized Divisions were stationed in Rovno before the war (about 150 km east of the border). Nothing is known about the losses in the first hours of the war. The forward 41st Panzer Division was located much to the west, in the Vladimir-Volynsky region (15 km from the border). This division really suffered losses: *"At 04:00 on 22.6.41 it was fired upon by long-range artillery fire of the enemy and during the period of mobilization had the loss of 10 fighters killed."* - **15th MK**. Area of pre-

war deployment: Brody - Kremenets (100-135 km from the border). At 4:45 a.m., a notification was received that German troops had crossed our state border, a combat alert was announced, and a package with a directive from the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District was opened. By the way, the report on the combat operations of the 15th mechanized corps also indicates the date of approval of the operational plan: May 31, 1941 (!!!) The divisions of the corps began to enter the areas of concentration in accordance with this directive. The only mention of the losses of the first day of the war is found in the report of

the commander of the 37th Panzer Division: *"... at the end of the day on June 22, 1941, in the concentration area, parts of the division were bombarded by enemy aircraft for the first time. The area of concentration of the 73rd tank regiment was bombed especially hard, since the latter was concentrated near the Brodsky airfield, but there were no losses of vehicles. 2 people were killed by machine-gun fire from the air ... "*

- **4th MK**. Area of pre-war deployment: Lvov (80 km west of the border of that time). This mechanized corps was the first to move. Already on June 20, 1941, the 8th

tank and 81st motorized divisions, at the same time, the anti-aircraft artillery divisions of these divisions were recalled from the Lvov camp, which were ordered to cover the location of ground forces from the air. The 32nd Panzer Division, stationed on the eastern outskirts of Lvov, was alerted at 2 am on June 22 and began advancing along the streets of the city towards the Yavorovsky highway. The corps motorcycle regiment left the main deployment site even earlier, since already at 9:45 a.m. it entered into battle with the Germans who had crossed the San River near the town of Lyatsk, 70 kilometers west of Lvov. There is no information about losses on the march from enemy bombing. - **8th MK.** Area of pre-war

deployment: Drohobych - Stry (70-100 km from the border). Already on June 19, 1941, the corps commander D.I. Ryabyshev ordered the withdrawal of most of the personnel from the barracks in Drohobych to the area of concentration. On June 20, by order of the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District, all tanks, even those that were mothballed, were fully refueled and received ammunition. At 3 o'clock in the morning on June 22, an order was received from the army headquarters to "be ready and wait for the order." At 10 o'clock in the morning an order was received, in accordance with which the corps was alerted and by the end of the day went to the border river San

west of Sambir. In the early morning of June 22, German aviation bombed Drohobych, but, as the corps commissar (deputy commander for political affairs) Popel directly points out in his memoirs, *"parts of the corps were almost not affected by the bombing."* During the march to the deployment area, one motorized rifle regiment of the 7th motorized division came under enemy air strikes and lost 70 people killed and 120 wounded. And these were **the biggest losses** on June 22 among the personnel of all Yu-3 mechanized corps. f.

The forces of German aviation in this area were so small that, already describing the situation on the second half of the day on June 24, Popel notes: "...

enemy aviation began to clearly neglect us. Planes indifferently flew over our columns, saving their ammunition for some other purpose..." [105].

Of course, the point here is not in "neglect" (the 8th MK in terms of the number of tanks surpassed the entire 1st Wehrmacht TGr), but in an elementary lack of

forces, aircraft, bombs. In order for the reader to independently assess how much such losses from the "first disarming strike" could reduce the combat effectiveness of mechanized corps,

we indicate their

number: 22nd

MK - 24,087,

15th MK - 33,935, 4th MK -

28,097, 8- and MK - 31,927 people [3]. These are the data for June 1, 1941. Considering that covert mobilization was in full swing in the country since the end of May 1941, on June 22 the number of personnel of these

mechanized corps was probably even higher. - **16th MK.** The corps was part of the 12th Army, stretching along a 350-kilometer front in the Carpathians, from the Uzhok Pass to the border with Moldova. In the first days of the war, this was one of the most passive sectors, in which the small Hungarian units carried out harassing military operations in order to pin down the forces of the 12th Army. General B. Arushanyan (in those days - the chief of staff of the 12th Army) writes so directly: *"On June 22, 1941, the enemy did not take active actions against the troops of the army."* The divisions of the 16th MK, deployed in the area of Stanislav (Ivano-Frankivsk) - Chernivtsi - Kamenets Podolsk, only on the morning of June 23 entered into the first episodic skirmishes with the enemy.

- **9th MK.** The corps was listed in the reserve of the front and was deployed in the deep rear, in the Shepetovka-Novograd-Volynsky region (220-250 km west of the border). On the morning of June 22, 1941, acting according to the pre-war operational plan, the corps began advancing to Rovno-Lutsk. K.K. Rokossovsky writes in his memoirs: *"German aviation appeared quite often. Mostly these were bombers passing over us at high altitude, oddly enough, without fighter escort"* [111]. There is little strange in this. The small number of Luftwaffe fighters were involved in battles over the border airfields, besides, the range of the German "Messers" simply did not allow them to patrol the sky over Shepetovka.

- **19th MK.** The corps was listed in the reserve of the front and was deployed in the rear, in the Zhitomir-Berdichev-Kazatin region (350-380 km from the border). The impact of the enemy on the first day of the war was not subjected. The order to advance to the Rovno region was received only in the evening, at 18 o'clock on June 22, 1941. When making a march, the columns of the 40th Panzer Division west of the city of Novograd-Volynsky "were repeatedly subjected to enemy *air attacks, as a result of which 2 people were killed and 4 people wounded.*" Further, the report on the combat operations of the 40th TD of the 19th Mechanized Corps states that on June 24-25, "*when the division moved to the Klevan area, the enemy repeatedly tried to stop the movement of the division with an air attack ... As a result of the bombing, the division had no losses ...*". During the advance to Rovno, the 43rd Panzer Division suffered no losses from enemy aircraft (as far as can be judged

from the commander's report on the division's combat operations). That's all that really happened. This was in reality "a

sudden disarming strike by German aircraft." Here the author considers it necessary to apologize to the readers. Of course, for the families of the Red Army soldiers, in whose homes the first "funerals" came, these victims were the greatest grief in their lives, and not "single losses." But military history is written in its own, rather specific, language. And in this language, the outcome of the first day of the war can be indicated in only one way: the mechanized corps went to the initial areas indicated by them for the offensive, **having suffered negligibly small**

There could not be any "first disarming strike", and in reality there was none.

Having scribbled mountains of paper about what was not and could not be, the Soviet "historians" exhausted another mountain of paper to deny what actually happened. We are talking about such an important component of preparation for war as **mobilization**. Each book, without exception, said that "history has given us little time", that our army could be "completely ready for war no earlier than 1942", and before that we had to do our best to delay, delay and delay the military clash with Germany ... What to delay? Where?

For what?

What is "full readiness for war", the author can not even imagine. And even more so, he is not able to understand how many years or centuries it takes to achieve this mysterious state of "full readiness". Mobilization is quite

another matter. This is a list of absolutely specific measures that the officials named by name were to carry out within the time limits established with an accuracy of days and hours. Refraining from further amateurish explanations, we will immediately quote from the monograph of General Vladimirsky - in those days the deputy chief of the operational department of the headquarters of the 5th Army, who knew almost everything about mobilization measures on duty (the key words are underlined by the author): " ... *Mobilization plans in all rifle formations and units*

*were worked out. They were systematically checked by higher headquarters, refined and corrected. The assignment to the formations and units of personnel, mechanized transport, horses, baggage and clothing at the expense of the resources of the national economy **was basically completed** ... The division was fully provided with small arms, with the exception of*

*some of its types (PPD assault rifles, heavy machine guns) ... Artillery the divisions **were provided for the most part in full**, with the exception of*

37-mm anti-aircraft guns, the shortage of ~~rifle~~ ^{weapons} which was 50 percent. The staffing of corps artillery regiments with materiel was 82 percent ...

The supply of mechanized transport rifle divisions was 40-50 percent. It was planned to replenish the missing cars and tractors with the resources of the national economy of the eastern regions of Ukraine ...

*From May 20, 1941, for the purpose of retraining, all the privates and sergeants of the reserve were involved in 45-day training camps with rifle divisions. This made it possible to increase the number of *lychny* composition of each rifle division **to 12-12.5 thousand people, or up to 85-90 percent of the wartime staff** ... "*